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OTHER HANDS

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FROM ENGLAND UNTO EGLAMAR

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EDAIN OF THE SECOND AGE

Editorial:

A Long-expected party

Well folks, here we are at last: *Other Hands* is five years old!!! Above all, it is a time to celebrate —to look back over half a decade of role playing in Middle-earth, and to bend our gaze forward towards many fun and fulfilling years of gaming to come.

How did *OtherHands* come to be? Most of you have probably read (or have read about) the panel discussion and FRP seminar that took place at the Tolkien Centenary Conference that inaugurated this endeavor back in 1992. But the real story begins with my own twelve-year career as a Middle-earth gamemaster which preceded that gathering.

My involvement in fantasy role playing games began only a few short years after my discovery of Tolkien at the age of eleven. How these two pursuits were finally joined was a lengthy process which I do not now fully recall, but I do remember very clearly the moment at which my game was transported to Middle-earth. While running one of those old D&D modules, my players decided they wanted to leave the immediate vicinity of the dungeon they were exploring. Argh! Every GM's worst nightmare: moving beyond the edge of the map. Flabbergasted, 1 reached in desperation for the only map book I had in my possession, none other than Karen Wynn Fonstad's *Atlas of Middle-earth.* The game continued smoothly as I suddenly found it possible to lead my players across an imaginary terrain that was as familiar and real to me as my own backyard. It soon began to dawn on me: why merely use Tolkien's geography to situate my games? Why not game in Middle-earth in its own right? The year was 1980.

During the course of the next decade, I devoted my energies to drawing out the implications of that question. I found a rule system that appealed to me, and set to adapting its mechanics to what I was then beginning to learn about the world I had chosen. The appearance of Iron Crown's MERP modules was welcome fuel for the undertaking; but I never fully integrated them, as my own gaming style was moving in a different direction from that of MERP. I wanted epic — a grand tapestry of story, character and action that invoked and depended upon something more than the mere mercenary motive that so dominated the scenarios in many FRP modules.

As the years passed, this divergence grew into discontent. I needed some outlet for these ideas, but found none. In 1987 I approached ICE as a prospective author, but found that the format of the "Ready-to-Run" modules then in vogue did not permit the scale and geographical mobility my adventure ideas demanded. Frustrated, I began sending out inquiries to various gaming journals in hopes of finding one that would be interested in publishing Middle-earth material...to no avail. At that time, most major gaming magazines were fast becoming parochialized preserves for the "in-house" products of their parent companies.

Something had to be done. Middle-earth gamers deserved to have their own voice, and fantasy role playing deserved a legitimately recognized niche within the world of Tolkien fandom. In 1990, I wrote a letter to Tolkien Enterprises, expressing these sentiments, and seeking some guidance from the people who ultimately controlled the rights to publications dealing with role playing in Middle-earth. Fortuitously, my query was answered: at that time, Tolkien Enterprises was reviewing ICE's Middle-earth license, and so were eager to receive feedback from its primary audience. Over the next two years, the legal parameters for the existence of *Other Hands* were defined. The 1992 Centenary gave further impetus and visibility to the prospect, and in April of 1993, the first issue went to press.

Enough history—and enough about me. What about you all? No, I'm not looking to start up a "my life and MERP" column. I am hoping, however, to gain a more focused picture of-what you, the subscribers of *Other Hands,* like or dislike about the content and format of this journal, and to this end I have contrived a survey for you all to fill out and return to me. (I aim to compile and present a summary of the results in our next issue.)

There are several reasons for holding this survey. First of all, because it would be neat to get a sense of who (besides yourself) reads *Other Hands* and what their interests are. More importantly though, budgetary and personal financial constraints have made it necessary this year to substantially raise the subscription cost (which will NOT, however, affect existing subscriptions) and to normalize the length of each issue to 24 pages. This means that the space we do have needs to be stuffed as efficiently as possible with the kinds of material people most want to see. To accomplish this goal I need your active feedback.

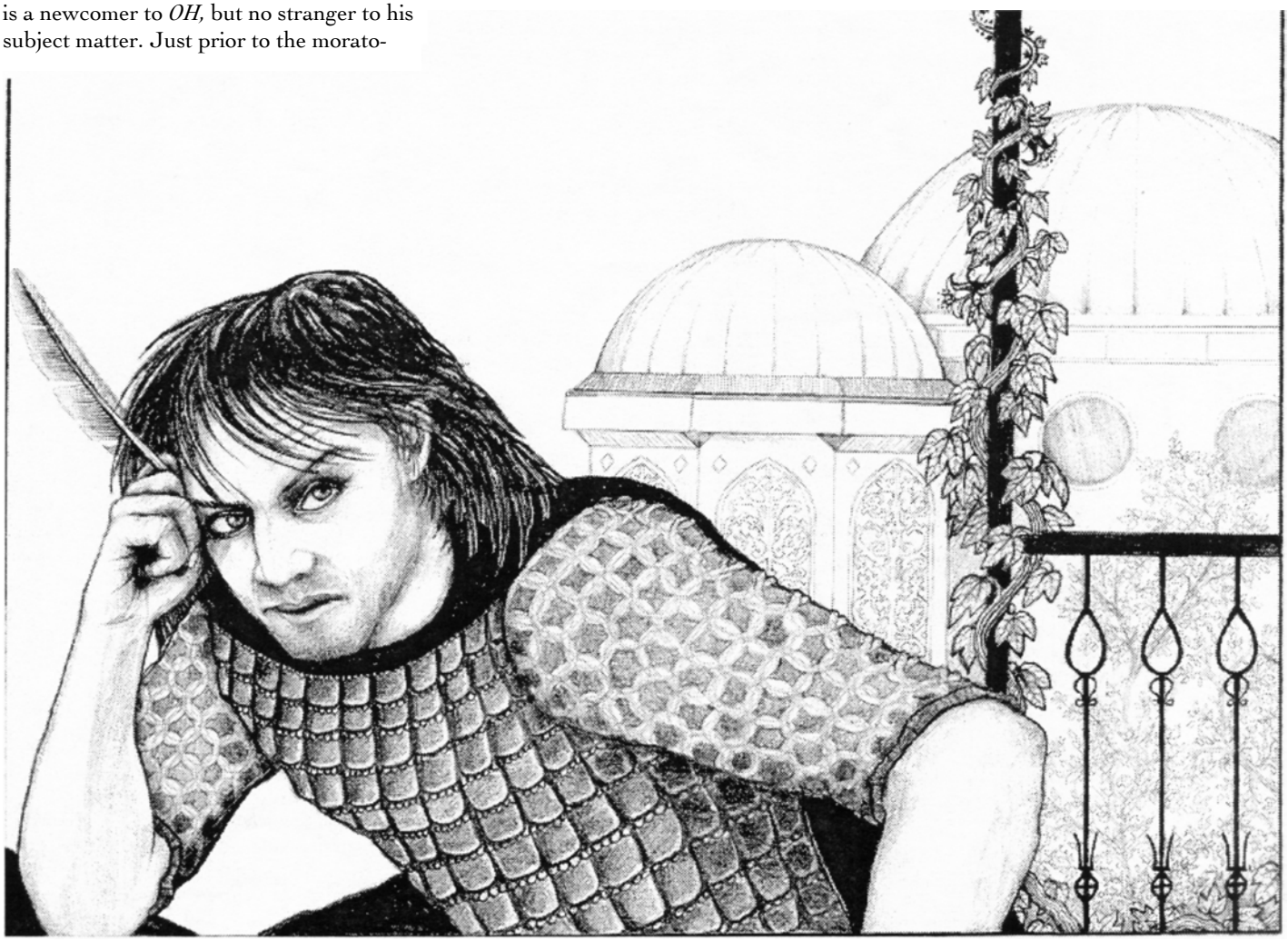
Whatever betide, I think you will not be disappointed with the offerings for this issue. We are missing a few regular features this time round. There is no "Frontlines" because there have been no substantially new developments on the horizon since last issue. This month's "Communications" and "Rastarin's Log" were a bit late in finding their way to us, so they will have to wait until next issue. But these absences merely mean that we have more space to devote to our main attractions for this issue!

Jeff Erwin, the author of our title piece, is a newcomer to *OH,* but no stranger to his subject matter. Just prior to the moratorium, Jeff was preparing an ambitious proposal for a Lindon realm module (a project which I hope he will continue to pursue for publication as an *OH* supplement). As part of his research on this region, Jeff has delved to the very roots of Tolkien's vision of the westernmost of Middle-earth's lands, roots which go back to the foundations of his ever-evolving mythology and its subcreative relationship to the world as we know it — and, more specifically, to the geography of England. Although Jeff refrains from exploring the ramifications of his argument for role playing in Lindon, they should be apparent to anyone who wants to set their campaign during the Fourth or later Ages. All in all, a bold and exciting piece of Tolkien scholarship.

Jasna Martinovic, who has been a reader of *OH* for several issues, now presents his first major contribution to our journal. His adventure, set in mid-Third Age Mirkwood, has the honor of containing the first specimens of a Silvan dialect currently being developed by David Salo (who was responsible for the invention of the Snow-elven tongue of *The Northern Waste* module). We hope to unveil the rules of this dialect in a future issue, as there has long been a need for an accessible linguistic system for creating names for Wood-elven characters and other proper names in Mirkwood—for now, let your ears savor the beauty of green Galbrethin, of shadowy Morwatha and of dark Muristil.

You may have already noticed the ugly guy in the photo on the back cover. That's me with some of my gaming group. I thought it would be nice for you to be able to put faces onto some the names who have made *Other Hands* (and MERP) what it is today. Cheers from all of us to all of you...

Chris Seeman
March 9, 1998



Digital Hands

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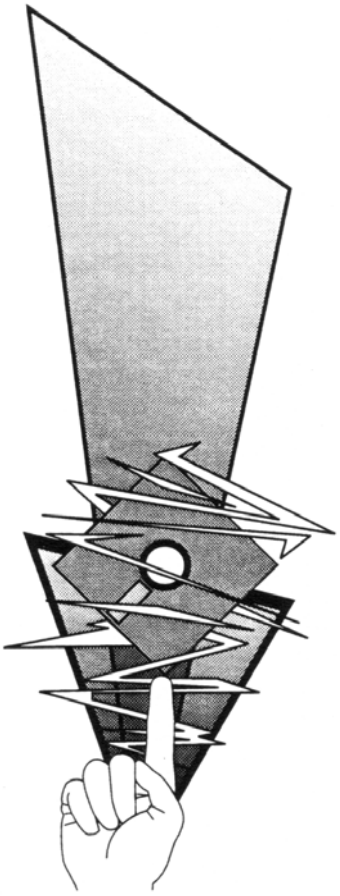
Since the late 70s there have been over 100 computer games set explicitly in Tolkien's Middle-earth and hundreds—probably thousands—of others strongly influenced by it (just count the number of games containing Orcs). But would Tolkien, had he been alive, have welcomed such a development? Or is computer gaming in Middle-earth nothing short of heresy? I am not sure, but in this article I will bring forth some thoughts on the subject.



I think it is a safe guess that Tolkien never saw or used a computer. If he had, he no doubt would have thought it one of Sauron's contraptions. Computers, even in the 70s, were large, noisy and very unfriendly to anyone without a degree in science and a couple of years of computing experience.

However, he liked electric typewriters (Letters: 344) and I think he would very much have enjoyed the word processing capabilities of today's personal computers. Just imagine all the work it would have saved him when revising *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* again and again.

So in spite of Tolkien's dislike for machines and other modern inventions—he once said that "Labour-saving machinery only creates endless and worse labour" (Letters: 88)—I think that he would probably have approved of computers as they look today (although he would certainly have disliked the Internet with all its preposterous Tolkien pages).

As a general rule, Tolkien did not think so highly of adaptations of his works to other media. The *Letters* contain several comments on the BBC radio dramatization and on a proposed animated movie with which Tolkien was not pleased. He did not like liberties taken with his plot, nor how the characters were handled, how the story was abbreviated and several other things.

In light of this, I think it safe to say that he would not have approved of nearly all the games that have so far seen the light of day. One of the worst examples is *Lord of the Rings: Game One* (published by Melbourne House in 1985, and by Addison-Wesley under the title *The Fellowship of the Ring Software Adventure* in 1986) where the authors have shown absolutely no regard for the spirit of the original, including in the game such things as photographs, a gramophone player, Radagast living in a monastery in the Blue Mountains, a heavy metal Orc band in the Barrow-downs, a cannabis plant close to Tom Bombadil's house and three black riders sitting in a pub drinking. In spite of this, the game was licensed by the Tolkien Estate.

It is even questionable if it is possible to make a computer game adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* which is true to the original. It lies in the nature of a computer game that it is always something of a simulation. As such, there is no telling in advance exactly what the final outcome will be. It is still, however, within the powers of the game designer to decide exactly what liberties the player should be allowed to take; what parts of the story should be manipulable. And this is a source for conflict: the designer can either decide to make a very flexible design (as with the MUDs or a strategy game such as *War in Middle Earth*, published by Virgin Games under the Melbourne House label in 1988) in which case the story line will certainly not follow the plot of the original book, or he or she can make a very rigid design, of which the Spanish game *El Señor de las Anillos, Parte 1: La Communidad del Anillo (Libro 1)* (shareware game written by Dimas Caparrós Gomez in 1991 without a license) is the best example, which results in a dreadfully boring game.

In my opinion, *The Lord of the Rings* is simply unsuitable as a basis for a game. Philip Mitchell (designer of the above mentioned *Lord of the Rings: Game One)* discovered this, and says that "[*TheLord of the Rings*] was not as well suited to the style of game we were doing then as *The Hobbit* was — at least we had a great deal more trouble coming up with an adventure game based on the stories (OH 18)." Why is this? I think one reason might be the epic scale of the book. There are few opportunities to take liberties with the plot without screwing up the spirit of the book.

If Tolkien computer games are ever to earn their *raison d'être*, I think the game designers must first realize a few things: It is easier (in a way) to make a game that is not based on any of the books, but merely takes Middle-earth as the setting of the game. Additionally, it is not enough just to read *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. For a more thorough understanding of Tolkien's ideas and motivations, a great deal of research into posthumous publications is necessary.

I could go on here and talk about making use of new technology and fancy stuff like that, but I will not, since I do not think it important. It all boils down to just one thing: respect for the original. I think it appropriate to end this article with the words of Scott Bennie from the introduction to the manual of *The Lord of the Rings, Vol II: The Two Towers* (Interplay, 1991): "I am not certain that Tolkien would have approved of computer games....Hopefully, this adaptation of 'Lord of the Rings' will transform the machine into an object of delight...; something more fit for Rivendell than Mordor." I do not know if Tolkien would have agreed that he succeeded (nor even that I would) but if more designers showed such respect, I am sure that we would see better games.

From England unto Eglamar

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This essay is a discussion of the physical relationship of our world (as we know it) and Endor—particularly the Shire and Lindon. As a personal vision, the relationship of the world of Middle-earth to our own was of interest to me since I read The Book of Lost Tales. *As the remainder of the History of Middle-earth was released, I continued to investigate this matter, which can have far-reaching implications for our ideas about Middle-earth, and particularly for the Grey Havens.*[1] *Thanks go to Oliver Schick, Chris Seeman and my brother Jeremy for their proof reading and comments.*

TOLKIEN'S VISION

Any reader *of Lost Tales* and the later volumes of the History of Middle-earth (particularly *The Lost Road* and *Sauron Defeated*) discovers a number of discarded or obscured elements of Endor's history. One of the most prominent and earliest parts of the *legendarium* was the Eriol/Ælfwine tale, a story that Tolkien experimented with and refined, but never wholly incorporated into our familiar history of Middle-earth as published in *The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion.* Nonetheless, he never turned his back upon it, and thus we may rightly consider the travels of Ælfwine and the related matters of the Notion Club as having a legitimate place within Endor.

I do not have the space to detail the full evolution of the story, but in its earliest form it told of a Dark Age Saxon, Ælfwine, who sailed to the land of Britain, where the Elves yet lingered. In that age, Britain was further removed from the Continent and was called Tol Eressëa, the Lonely Isle, by its Elven population. (More about the geography of this will be discussed later.)

Perhaps because of the innate difficulties of such a conception fitting within anything recognizable as recorded history, the tale was eventually revised, so that Ælfwine was a native of England (of a much later era) and sailed across the Atlantic, finding his way across a mystic route to Aman and Tol Eressëa, now the isle of the Elves in the West.

In this form the tale was to continue, shifting in detail, but remaining similar in broad form. The England/Elven association was preserved by the development of a new tradition, which described it as the last settlement of the Elves in the Old World. Similarly, Tolkien identified the Old World with the Hobbit lands: "Those days, the Third Age of Middle-earth, are now long past, and the shape of all lands has been changed; but the regions in which Hobbits then lived were doubtless as those in which they still linger: the Northwest of the Old World, east of the Sea(LotR I: 11)."

Until the publication of *Sauron Defeated,* there existed scant evidence that Tolkien meant this comment to be more than part of his framework of "translations" and traditions. But "The Notion Club Papers" (which make up a large portion of the latter half of that volume) make clear a much more solid contention: that Tolkien saw his creation, even at that late date (c. 1946) as having a continuing place within the greater conceit of a 'real-world' existence. In essence, the history of Endor was not merely the creation of a linguist and a fantasist, but the representation of an ancient and mythological reality.

Of course, the pseudo-mythic/historical element is frequently a vital part to the creation of alternate worlds, particularly in science fiction, although fewer today attempt to justify themselves by making a fabricated niche in the real world. Lesser literary efforts may be seen in the 30s' and 40s' sword & sorcery epics (which were superficially influenced by Theosophy and Donnelly's *Atlantid).* The concept of a primeval world, antedating almost all recorded human history, in which magic (sometimes) works and monsters (often) roam, was a fertile idea for fantasists.

While Tolkien's "Notion Club Papers" may rightly, I think, be compared to C. S. Lewis' *Narnia,* which interwove the "real-world" with fantasy, it should be remembered that Tolkien's tales, with their ease of invention and imagination, are ultimately rooted in the fantasies of his own childhood. So, consciously or not, Tolkien may well have tried to infuse a childhood vision with the trappings of veracity and detail, thus rendering it more impervious to the vicissitudes of our cynical world. It has often been noted that the peculiar timelessness of Tolkien's work is a direct result of the years of development he put into it. We can imagine it as being "real," even as having occurred (like the *Iliad,* say) because it unself-consciously asserts its internal complexity and depth.

Therefore one may *suspect* that Tolkien recreates the world of his childhood (exaggerated and repopulated) in the Third and earlier ages. His choice of an "Old World" reshaped—but never allegorized or transplanted to a mythical universe of its own — strengthens that idea. Whatever the case, it remains a very real issue whether the "world" to which Middle-earth belongs is the actual world of Northern European folklore or whether Tolkien intended it to merely mesh with our modern universe. In *Morgoth's Ring,* for instance, Christopher Tolkien printed a series of essays dedicated to rationalizing Endor into a recognizable "possible past" to our scientific age.

But Tolkien either rejected or abandoned the sweeping consequences of such a project. And ultimately, despite the references to the sameness of both worlds, as in "The Lost Road," this remains elusive: "Looking on a familiar hill, [Alboin] would see it suddenly standing in some other time and story: 'the green shoulders of *Amon-ereb,'* he would say. 'The waves are loud upon the shores of *Beleriand,'* ....(HoMe V: 38)."[2]

But the evidence from purely textual material is dense, unhelpful and sometimes misleading.[3] The real answer to the placement of Leithian (the Elven name for England in the evolving Ælfwine tradition) in our world lies in the maps and related materials drafted by Tolkien. By analyzing these we may investigate the physical nature of Tolkien's conceptions.

MAPPING LEITHIAN

Any discussion of correspondences between the geography of our world and that of Endor must begin with the following passage from Tolkien's letters:

The action of the story takes place in the North-West of 'Middle-earth', equivalent in latitude to the coasttands of Europe and the north shores of the Mediterranean.... If Hobbiton and Rivendell are taken (as intended) to be about the latitude of Oxford, then Minas Tirith, 600 miles south, is about the latitude of Florence. The Mouths of the Anduin and the ancient city of Pelargir are at the latitude of ancient Troy (Letters: 375-376).

It is important to emphasize that *The Hobbit* was originally an interloper to the world of *The Silmarillion.* Tolkien often expressed a certain amount of dismay at its heterogeneity and its ill-constructed relationship to "Gondolin" and other artifacts of his earlier writings. Therefore he came to regard the anachronisms of the Shire more as the casual references of a storyteller unbound by the conventions of the Elven legends. But at the writing of *The Hobbit,* the Shire is obviously a part of "England" — a pseudo-England attached to a murky Norse-Germanic Wilderland.

It is notable that *The Hobbit* does make reference to the sea being near the western edge of the Shire, but it is hard to discern any concrete reference to Lindon, the Grey Havens or anything recognizable from Beleriand. Indeed, it cannot be said for certain that the Blue Mountains or Lindon were there at all: "Not the Gandalf who was responsible for so many quiet lads and lasses going off into the Blue for mad adventures. Anything from climbing trees to visiting Elves — or sailing in ships, sailing to other shores! (Hobbit: 14)."[4]

But the idea of Lindon was present in Tolkien's Silmarillion writings. As originally conceived, the broken lands from the War of Wrath would be transformed into something akin to our Europe: "In those days there was a great building of ships upon the shores of the Western Sea, and especially upon the great isles which, in the disruption of the northern world, were fashioned of ancient Beleriand (HoMe V: 331)." This idea was eventually abandoned, out of the necessity for fitting in two subsequent ages. The effect of this was to render the distance (in physical form) of our world from Endor more acute, for Tolkien never described the events that remade his world into the world in which Arry and Ælfwine live.

It is evident from all later versions of the Ælfwine story that, of all parts of Britain, the West Country has the leading role. Here I quote from Tolkien's outline at the time of "The Lost Road" (c. 1937): "Ælfwine and Eadwine live in the time of Edward the Elder, in North Somerset. Ælfwine ruined by the incursions of Danes. Picture opens with the attack (c. 915) on *Portloca* (Porlock) and *Wæced* (HoMe V: 80)."[5] Here, for the first time, Tolkien's world enters a definite time-frame and begins mentioning identifiable locations. Porlock is in western Somerset. Later, the outline mentions Lundy, an island off the north Devon coast. Of course, the most prominent topographical feature of this region is the deep channel of the Severn estuary.

What is next discovered is hardly accidental. If a map of western Britain is superimposed upon Tolkien's map of Lindon (making adjustments to account for the Earth's curvature), the size and proportions given to the Firth of Lune are found to be nearly identical to those of the real-world Severn channel.[6]

This identification is bolstered by much circumstantial detail. The early text "Ælfwine of England" (c. 1920) contains references to Déor's wife's country of Lyonesse (the sunken realm off Cornwall in Celtic myth, the birthplace of Tristram) and "the lost land beyond Belerion whence Elves at times set sail." It is from this text that the Britain = Luthany/Lúthien/Leithian reaches its final form.[7]

Further details now emerge regarding the specific regions involved: "Ælfwine has sailed more seas than you have heard of; and the Welsh tongue is not strange to him....His wife was of Cornwall (HoMe V: 84)." It is important that, in *Lost Tales,* the land of Cornwall was the last remnant of the Elven lands. It is also in Cornwall that the Errols of "The Lost Road" have their summer home. In "The Notion Club Papers," Arundel lived on the far side of the Severn channel, "in Pembrokeshire, near Penian" (HoMe IX: 234). Both Dyfed and Cornwall are (or were) Welsh regions, on the rim of Britain.[8]

Later, the following passages occur: "As we crossed the Severn Sea earlier in the summer, Arry had looked back, along the coast to the south, at the shores of Somerset, and he had said something I couldn't quite catch....We arrived in a small boat at Porlock Weir on Saturday....(HoMe XI: 268)." Alwin's dreams begin in earnest here, along the northern shore of Devon, and he somehow recalls the deeds of his ancestors along those shores.

The importance of Cornwall, Devon and Wales is an early conception of Tolkien's, but it is perhaps enduring because of the underlying real mythology of that region — a frontier region of foreign, mystical and pagan beauty. The poem "The Horns of Ylmir" from the Ouenta was apparently written based on poetry composed near the tip of Cornwall in the summer of 1914 (HoMe IV: 214).[9] Cornwall was also a common vacation destination for Tolkien. It is, of course, one of the regions most associated with Arthur, but it was also accounted by the English to be the home of a variety of fairies.[10]

Evidently, the Straight Road may still endure here, along the broken shores of Lhûn. The obvious answer to the importance of the channel within the *legendaruim* is that the route remained open here, from the last abode of the Eldar, for any stragglers. The Amon Ereb which Alboin remembers in "The Lost Road" is the weathered hill of Beleriand itself, standing in the west of Britain. While originally, in *Lost Tales,* it is implied that some Elves yet linger in the west of Britain, it is clear that by "The Notion Club Papers," none remain, leaving only dreams and some few, half-enchanted glades.

THE HAVENS "BEYOND THE ICE-AGES"

For the Tolkien enthusiast, after conceiving of a reasonable physical connection between Endor and our own world, it is interesting to consider the intervening ages, after the last ship and the destruction of the One Ring.[11] Most obvious of the changes is the shift in the sea-level and the creation of Europe.

However, nothing from Tolkien's works can resolve this well. In a marginal note to a letter in 1958, Tolkien wrote that he imagined "the gap [since the end of the Third Age] to be about 6000 years: that we are now at the end of the Fifth Age (Letters: 283)." This is accurate insofar as the peoples of Tolkien's writings could, more or less, be living then. But it neglects the problem of geological time — that, by that time, Europe had already assumed the shape it has today.[12]

If one were to place Third Age geography within our knowledge of geological and human history, it would fit before the last (Wurmian) glacial cycle (about 10,000 years ago). Glacial dynamics can account for most (but not all) geographical change.

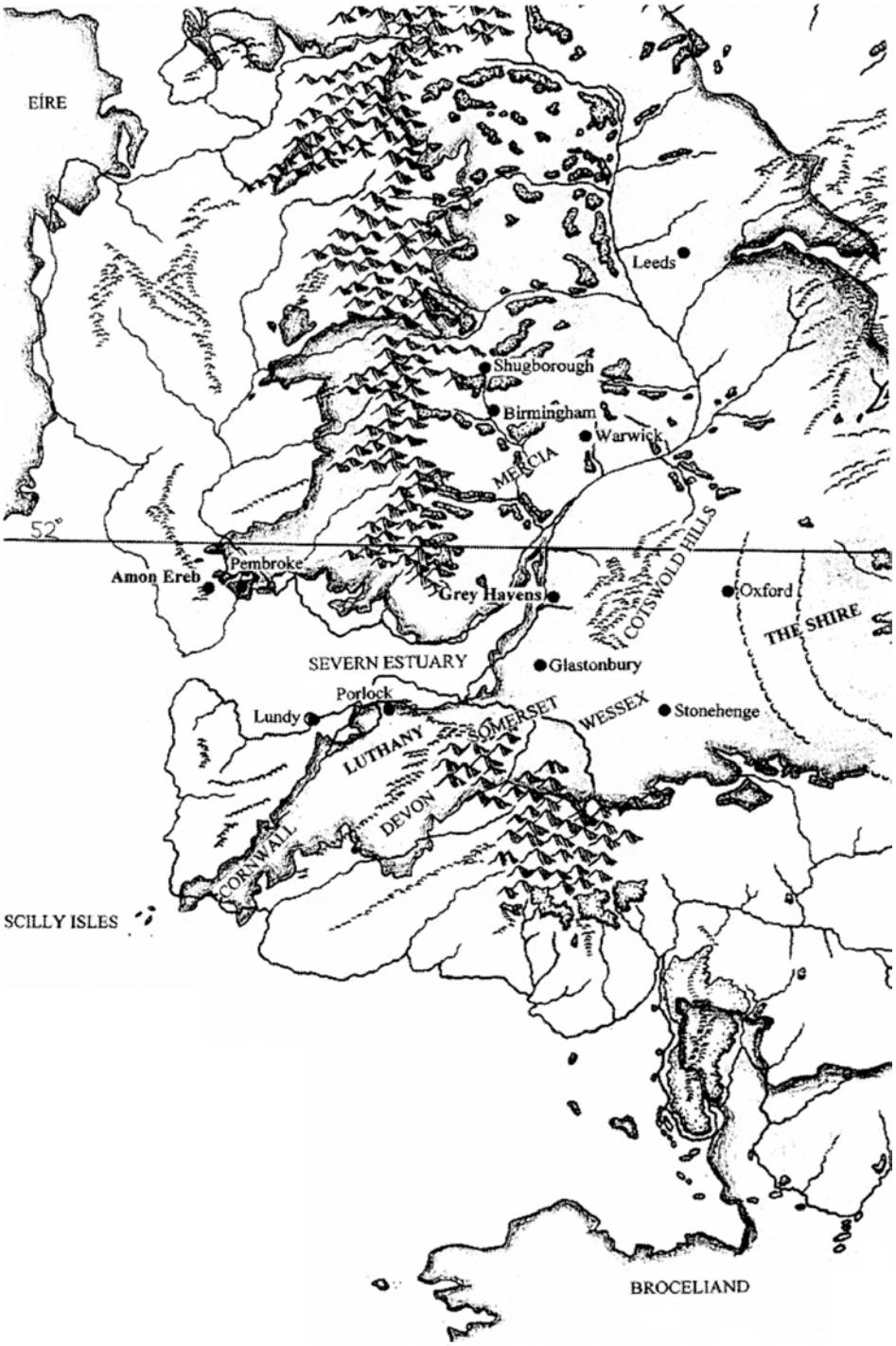
The ice age can be directly linked to the collapse of civilization in Endor. Note also that any conception of Endor within our "scientific" worldview requires that the majority of the dramatic events of the pre-Sun era be qualified or omitted (as in *Morgoth's Ring*). While such a significant change is not very intrusive in the Third and later ages, it has a large impact on Eldarin history. Certainly Tolkien experimented with a non-literal version where the folk of Men adopted certain Elven tropes as truth; but, of course, the great part of material written about Middle-earth is literal, taking the Sun, the Moon and so on as true in a physical, non-mythical sense.

It is important to realize that the myths of the Elder Days are devised according to and adhere to the European strata of myth (i.e., the interconnected folktales and legends which European peoples thought of as recognizable and "real"). This is a good enough reason to explore their "mythical" presence in our world — even if contrived in our own century—since that would be as Tolkien intended: not to mislead but to continue. However, I can justify the "physical, scientific" investigation because of the ways in which Tolkien made efforts to present a physical reality, with maps, language and history. Such an effort has been (as can be seen already) a mixed success. But the fact of any success is noteworthy.

Because Tolkien returned several times to that theme, it seems proper to imagine the last Dúnedain as enduring in Lindon, perhaps mixing with the few Elves still there. This would serve to derive the Dúnadan/Elvish strain in Arry and Alboin, and in Ælfwine before them. Whether through the inheritance of actual descent or rather by the lingering Elven character of Britain, a little of the Elder Days has been preserved.

A less effective argument can be made that the Danwaith (Nandor) of Lindon are in some way akin to the Tautha dé Danann of Celtic myth or the mythical (possibly Celtic) proto-Danes. This seems to fit with Tolkien's references to the last lingering companies, doomed to fade. A primitive conception of Tolkien's derived from the fragmentary Germanic tradition about Ing (w), whom he included as a progenitor of the Anglo-Saxons. This aspect of the mythology is overshadowed by the presence of Ingwë of the Vanyar, who has a contradictory past. Since Tolkien eventually created a "translation" device that accounted for the Germanic names and language in his stories, it is unclear whether he conceived of these groups as having a link with the historical Anglo-Saxons.

In the end, the relationship of Endor to our world depends on the reader. Some may prefer something alien, others yearn for myth and the Eldar (as I think Tolkien did), having a place more rooted to European folk traditions, independent and ultimately greater than a mere fiction.



THE MAP

The map presented on the preceding page represents a hand-sketched rendering of England superimposed on Pete Fenlon's northwestern Middle-earth map. Although some discrepancies exist between this map and Tolkien's own, it must be kept in mind that the various maps of Middle-earth, both of Tolkien's devising and not, have somewhat variable scales. The comment that Tolkien makes about the distance between Pelargir and Hobbiton is not reflected in the scale to the ICE map used in MERP

and MECCG, but it is inaccurate within the bounds of the UT map as well.

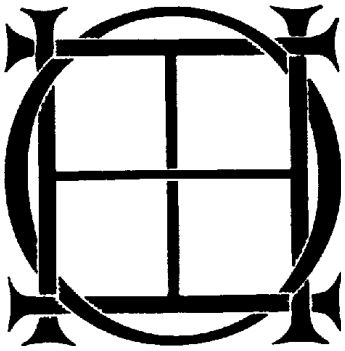
In any case, it seems likely that Tolkien was looking at the map from *The Lord of the Rings* at the time, not his own drafts. Were one to use the latter, Lindon and the Shire would be substantially larger than Britain. Because the Gondor map from *The Return of the King* seems to be most detailed in scale, the scale from the larger map of all of the northwest may be assumed to be Gondor-centric.

In order to avoid the infamous "Greenland" effect of a Mercator projection, the firth region has been adjusted to fit a curved world (as that was the origin of my map of Britain).

- **Amon Ereb** (Skomer). This hill from *The Silmarillion* is placed according to measurements approximated from Pete Fenlon's map. The island of Skomer off Pembrokeshire (Dyfed) is quite near to the estimated location.
- **Broceliand.** The Breton forest associated with Morgan le Fey and her ensorcellment of Merlin, in the Continental versions of the Arthur cycle. It is also, of course, Tolkien's first name for Beleriand.
- **Lundy.** An island off the north Devon coast. It is mentioned in "The Lost Road."
- **Glastonbury.** Reputed resting place of Arthur.
- **Oxford.** Tolkien places Rivendell and Hobbiton at the latitude of Oxford, somewhat south of 52° North (Letters: 376).
- **Pembroke** (Forlond). A town in Wales situated in the same location as I estimate for Forlond. It is mentioned in "The Notion Club Papers."
- **Porlock** (Harlond), A village situated on the western spur of Somerset (near enough to Tolkien's placement of Harlond). It is mentioned in "Ælfwine of England," "The Lost Road" and "The Notion Club Papers."
- **Scilly Isles** (Lyonesse). A group of small islands off the coast of Cornwall, and one of the two most common spots associated with sunken Lyonesse (the other is St. Michael's Bay, off Land's End).
- **Shugborough & Great Haywood.** A manor and village near Stafford. Apparently elements of the surrounding geography were used by Tolkien when he created Tathrobel/Tavrobel.
- **Somerset.** While it is unclear whether it had any impact on the naming of Lindon, there is a town by that name (or a variant, Linton) in Somerset.
- **The Shire.** Situated (based on all the other measurements) in southeastern England. The Water is roughly placed around the Thames valley.
- **Warwick** Chiefly notable as the home of Tolkien's Lúthien (Edith Tolkien) and as the germ for Kôr.

FOOTNOTES

1. The title of this essay derives from an early draft of "The Lay of Leithian," describing the width of Thingol's kingdom (HoMe III: 157; Broceliand = Beleriand).
2. As is described later, the mentioning of these places is critical in our placement of Lindon within our world.
3. Here, for instance, the text is not clearly indicative of a memory awakened by like or by the actual location.
4. Collaborative detail may be found in HoMe IV: 41, 72, 159, 174, 199.
5. Wæced = Watchet.
6. When the maps are superimposed, it becomes apparent that the Shire is also embraced by the isle of Britain. In general outline, the areas surrounding the Shire remained stable as Tolkien worked on *The Lord of the Rings*. The most prominent feature of the First Map in this region is the Firth of Lune (HoMe VII: 302).
7. Although the meanings of the words change. In the latest form of the "Etymologies," Leithian signified "release from bondage" and Lúthien "enchantress" (HoMe V: 368, 370).
8. Cornwall was historically known by the Anglo-Saxons as "West Wales." Until the 18th century a Brythonic (Welsh) dialect was spoken there.
9. For Tolkien's relationship with Cornwall, see Carpenter's *Biography*.
10. Tolkien was, in fact, aware of this discrepancy, but found the problem insoluble—the imaginary geography had become too closely interwoven with its mythology for it to be brought into accord with the findings of geological science.
11. To a certain extent, there is some irony that in *Lost Tales* the Celtic peoples were described as inimical to Elves and the old ways — but this germ was abandoned rather quickly, and replaced by a much more positive characterization.
12. "If you went back beyond the Ice-ages, I imagine you would find nothing in these parts; or at any rate a pretty beastly and uncomely race, with a tooth-and-nail culture, and a disgusting language with no echoes for you, unless those of food-noises.' 'Would you?' said Alboin. 'I wonder' (HoMe V: 40)."



The Mystery of the Blessed Child

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I. THE TALE

The Northmen of Mirkwood are descendants of those who, during the Dark Years of the Second Age, "took refuge in the fastnesses of wood and mountain," seeking ever to elude the dominion of Sauron of Mordor. Beneath the eaves of that greatest of forests, these fugitives were befriended by the Wood-elves, whose king granted them leave to settle there; hence, the tribe came to be known as the Woodmen.

Apprenticed to the Elves in the ways of the forest, the Woodmen soon abandoned their old tribal structure, dispersing throughout their new homeland in wandering bands of a few families each, though they did not forget their ancestral ties to one another. In addition to the lore of the wild, the Elves also imbued their mortal allies with a profound reverence for the Valar and a deep respect for the natural world around them. This body of tradition (which they call the Growithatriggwa) the Woodmen received and passed on to their children through the person of the *wita.*

Usually a woman, the *wita* (or "wise one") was the healer and spiritual leader of her band, second only to the headman in authority. *Witans* were also thought to possess prophetic insight, and during the Dark Years their counsel guarded their people against the Shadow. Following the victory of the Last Alliance over Sauron (in which the Woodmen played their part), it is said that the Aiwawitans, the high gathering of the *witans,* pronounced this oracle:

In the long bright times, our people will grow, spreading from one eave of the forest to the other, Yet in the dark days that are to come (and come they shall), a light will arise beyond all hope. In the year when green leaves shrink under darkness and evil Winds bring foulness and sickness to the land, a boychild will be born. Blessed by the Powers—Baumya the Hunter, Akranaqiba the Earth Mistress and Gawerthi the Heater—he will draw our scattered people together, and for a white the Shadow will be forced to withdraw its fingers from our lands so that we may recover from its accursed ailments and withstand many hardships. His blood will forever survive in the houses of our headmen. But if somehow this child should die before his appointed time, then hope will be lost and our folk will diminish and wither, so that in the hour of the final battle against evil there will be no Woodman Warrior to defend the honor of our forefathers.

A thousand years and more were to pass before the events foretold by the Aiwawitans were to unfold.

THE RETURN OF THE SHADOW

After a millennium of vanquishment, Sauron the Maia began secretly to take shape again in the world, and Greenwood the Great, once a refuge to those who sought freedom from the Shadow, became transformed into the very heart of that darkness: Mirkwood. Scarcely a mortal generation after his return, whispers began to spread among the Woodman bands that a powerful *wita,* or perhaps an evil spirit, had occupied and laid claim to Naquath Hlain, a rocky prominence in the southern reaches of the forest believed by the Woodmen to be a gateway to the underworld and the land of the dead. In the parlance of the outside world, such rumors gave to this mysterious figure the sobriquet of "ecromancer,"but the Woodmen called him Nahtafath (Master of Night) and Wundabringand (Inflictor of Wounds).

Soon well-nigh all of southwestern Mirkwood lay under the Shadow, and most of the Woodman bands of that region fled north, withdrawing beyond the forest narrows to found the fortified settlement of Burh Widaus. But one and stood their ground, putting faith in the ancient prophecy of the Blessed Child and refusing to abandon their homeland to the Necromancer. A valiant gesture, but fatal in its miscalculation of the true power of their foe. It did not take long for Sauron to capture the band' *wita* and wholly break her spirit upon his superhuman will, binding her to his service through the bestowal of an enchanted artifact, the Gauntlet of the Vengeful Healer. Through its sorcery, the *wita* succeeded in cowing the Woodmen into submission, compelling her people to abandon the Growithatriggwa and to worship Nahtafath instead. Only by so doing, said she, would Wundabringand suffer them to wander his lands.

Thus the peaceful religious practices of these Woodmen were slowly manipulated into an evil cult. Their band became reduced, in the course of the disastrous intervening decades, into a bunch of poor, hopeless people struggling to survive under constant pressure from the Orc of Naquath Hlain and other evils which the Necromancer had brought into their lands. It became known to Sauron, however, that though the Woodmen outwardly paid homage to him, in their hearts they still hoped for the fulfillment of the prophecy. The Dark Lord felt he must lull these reluctant subjects into a false sense of security—a task for which his *witans* now discredited in the eyes of their people because of their allegiance to him, were unsuitable. The Master of Night required another servant, an outsider, to achieve his end.

THE COMING OF GALLOR

The woes of the Woodmen multiplied with the passage of years. The trees and beasts of the forest became unfriendly, and the attacks of the Uruk-torg (the Orc-tribe that guarded the passage of the forest narrows for the Necromancer) grew ever bolder and more menacing. It was at this nadir of their existence that the Woodmen found, as it seemed, a protector.

In the midst of one of the Orc-raids, there appeared a tall man cloaked and hooded in deep blue robes. Invoking unseen powers to aid him, the man brandished a shining sword before the terror-stricken Orcs, who turned back at once in flight. To the minds of the Woodmen it was clear that this man was a *wita* of great power and therefore a potential ally. When they approached the stranger and inquired about his name and tribe, the man said that he was Gallor, a loremaster who hailed from Gondor, and that he desired to spend his final days in fellowship with the Elves and the Free Men of the North. Having heard rumor of the darkening of the Greenwood the Fair, Gallor had decided to establish himself in a lonely keep, not far from the Woodman camp, where he might hold in check the depredations of the Shadow.

At first the Woodmen called these good tidings, as it seemed that they had gained a powerful and benevolent neighbor; but soon it became plain that their newfound savior would demand a price for his friendship. Every five years, declared Gallor, the Woodmen must surrender to him a few of their male infants, whom he would raise to serve him in his keep, to grow up to be decent, if somewhat recluse, warriors under his tutelage. The proud Woodmen were loath to accede to this condition; but at last, at the fervent urging of their *wita,* they agreed to render to Gallor this "child tithe" as tribute for his protection against the Necromancer's minions.

In token of his alliance with the Woodmen, Gallor gave a gift to their headman, a protective charm bearing the device of a running wolf and inscribed with words in a tongue they did not understand. In fact, the words were those of the Black Speech of Mordor, and they read: *I, Master of Wolves, grant you the power to calm my servants.*

GALLOR'S TRUE IDENTITY

To all appearances, Gallor upheld his pact with the Woodmen: under his protection, the Uruk-torg ceased their attacks. After several years had passed, some of the Children of the Tithe, now grown-up in the loremaster s service, began to appear in the ranks of Gallor's quinquennial embassies to the Woodmen (though they were not permitted to fraternize with their families). All seemed to be as Gallor had promised. Yet it was not so.

In truth, Gallor was not a Dúnadan sage but a servant of Darkness; and far from being the foe of the Uruk-torg, he was their master, sent to govern them by the Necromancer himself. His pact with the Woodmen was equally farcical. The Children of the Tithe were indeed destined for his service, but they received their upbringing not in Gallor's keep, but under the strict eye of the pedagogues of the Shadow in Naquath Hlain. By the institution of this child tithe, Sauron hoped to guard against the coming of the Blessed Child.

Gallor's true name was Wulfapaida, an evil Northman from the upper vales of Anduin (then under the dominion of the Witch-realm of Angmar). Born of a clan of skin-changers who possessed the gift of assuming the shape of wolves, Wulfapaida quickly rose in the ranks of the Angmarean forces, gaining the trust of his superiors through his extreme cunning and reliability. In time, Wulfapaida was sent to Naquath Hlain as an able and eager servant to deal with a perennial thorn in the Necromancer's side: the skin-changing Berninga and the tenacious Woodmen.

Well-equipped to match the strength of Sauron's nearest enemies, the Dark Lord enhanced Wulfapaida's native abilities through the gift of a powerful artifact, the Belt of Living Change, which allowed Wulfapaida to assume any Mannish or Elven semblance he desired (hence his ability to masquerade as a Gondorian loremaster). The only detail of his appearance Wulfapaida's belt could not change were his yellow, wolfish eyes, so that he always wore a hood when outside his keep.

THE BIRTH OF THE BLESSED CHILD

In the winter of 1635, the Great Plague visited itself upon Rhovanion, devastating the Northmen; but in the early spring of the following year, the prophesied hope of the Woodmen was born. The identity of the Blessed Child was discovered by his parents when his father, severely wounded by wolves, asked on his deathbed that his newly-born son might be set in his arms for the first and last time. Miraculously, the Woodman did not die, but managed to recover his strength without ill-effect. In token of this, the boy's mother named him Wenakran (Fruit of Hope). At this portent, the old women in the camp began muttering about the long-foretold coming of the Blessed Child, that it was a final warning that they must abandon their present ways and restore the Growithatriggwa of their ancestors.

It seemed that Dwimraqino, the band's *wita,* agreed with them, because she took the boy under her protection, ordering Swintha, the headman, to conceal his existence at all cost from Gallor. The boy was then in the winter of his second year (1637), and soon Gallor's servants would be arriving to claim the tithe. The entire band readily obeyed her.

But the birth of the child could not be hidden. Soon enough, an envoy appeared in the camp, expressing Gallor's disappointment at the Woodmen's betrayal of his trust, and threatening to withdraw his protection from them unless the hidden child were surrendered by dawn of the following day. Everyone in the camp turned to Dwimraqino for insight. The *wita* responded confidently, instructing them to return to their hearths to pray while she withdrew with the child and Bokamawi, her apprentice, to her own hut to entreat the spirits of their forefathers for guidance. The next morning, Swintha and the other leading members of the band approached the *wita's* hut, waiting for Dwimraqino to appear. After a while, they called to her, but there was no answer.

Meanwhile, Gallor's envoy, a swarthy-skinned Southron named Malkûsh, returned with his armed guard, demanding the child. Receiving no answer from the Woodmen, they forced their way into the *wita's* hut — Dwimraqino, her apprentice and the child were gone! All that remained to be found on the floor of the hut were components of *wita*-rituals and the charred, smoking remains of a large book. A search of the entire camp was immediately conducted and, soon enough, tracks were found, leading off westwards.

Malkûsh at once commanded Swintha and his hunters to pursue the most obvious trail, while he stayed in camp, investigating the remains of the book and sending a couple of his guards back to the keep to inform Wulfapaida. The Southron suspected that the treacherous *wita* was making for the Vales of Anduin, to bring the child to the Elves of Lórien or to Wulfapaida's greatest enemies, the Berninga. Malkûsh would have led the pursuit himself had not Wulfapaida set him in charge of the keep in his absence. For at that time Wulfapaida was about to leave for Angmar, being commanded by the Necromancer to assist the Witch-king in the wolf-breeding pits of Carn Dûm.

When word of these events reached Wulfapaida, he sent instructions to Malkûsh to continue overseeing the hunt from Burgan Stath (the Woodmen's camp), but to "withdraw Gallor's protection" (i.e., give orders for the Uruk-torg to attack and exterminate the band) in case the Woodmen should openly rebel against him. Then Wulfapaida, taking on wolf's form, rushed off towards the edge of the forest, hoping to catch up with Dwimraqino himself.

Following hard on the *wita's* trail against an oncoming snowstorm, the skin-changer swiftly out-distanced Swintha's party, leaving the exhausted hunters stranded beside a newly formed snow-drift which blocked their path. Continuing his relentless pursuit, Wulfapaida finally overtook his prey. But the tracks led only to Bokamawi; the wita herself and the child were nowhere to be found — Dwimraqino had outwitted him! Enraged, Wulfapaida ambushed the poor apprentice, forcing the truth out of her by torture until she expired.

DWIMRAQINO'S SCHEME

The *wita's* rescue of the Blessed Child from Wulfapaida's clutches was hardly motivated by altruism. Dwimraqino's devotion to the Necromancer is absolute, and her greatest desire is to be found worthy in his eyes. This sense of loyalty to the Master of Night is not, however, incompatible with personal ambition. The *wita* dislikes being subordinate to Wulfapaida, viewing him as a competitor for her master's favor. Now, with the Blessed Child under her power, Dwimraqino aims to prove herself a more fervent devotee of Nahtafath and a more valuable asset to Naquath Hlain.

The fourth *wita* to lead the Woodmen of Burgan Stath since Sauron brought the band under his shadow, Dwimraqino is unlike her predecessors in her knowledge and use of writing. (The Woodmen are an oral culture.) Educated in the depths of Naquath Hlain, Dwimraqino became conversant with sorcerous texts at an early age. The Necromancer continued to foster Dwimraqino's penchant for dark lore after she assumed the role of *wita* by sending her gifts of tomes from time to time. Ironically, it was from one of these very tomes that Dwimraqino conceived her rebellion against Wulfapaida.

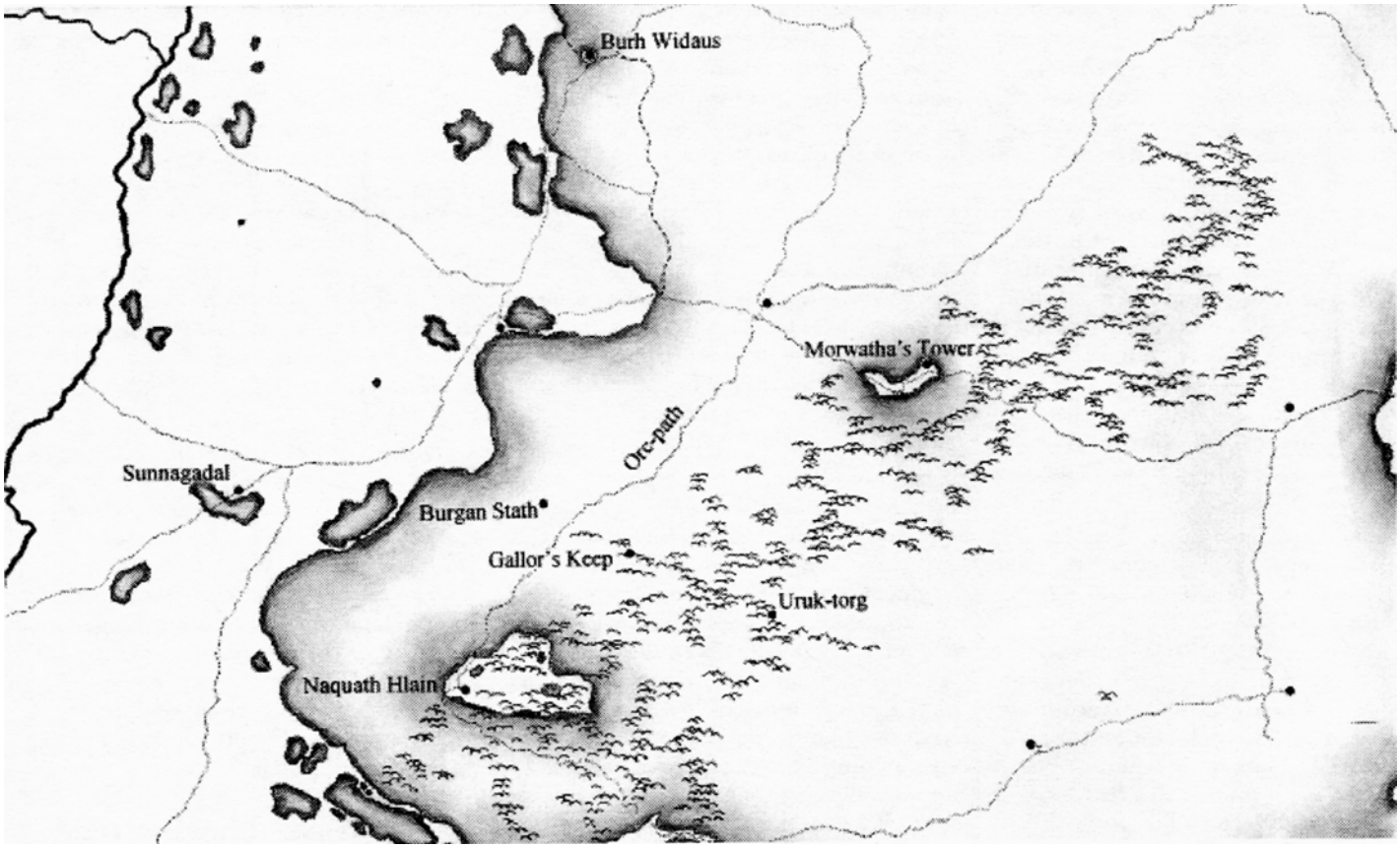
One day Dwimraqino acquired a tome containing strange drawings of altars and sacrificial knifes that intrigued her. Unfortunately, it was inscribed in a tongue of which she had no knowledge. Her apprentice Bokamawi, however, recognized it as being written in the Grey-elven tongue. (Bokamawi was not originally a member of Dwimraqino's band, but had been raised in the town of Maethelburg, where she had learned Sindarin in the service of the Gondorian legate.) When Bokamawi translated the book's title, the *wita* was amazed to learn that it was none other than *Morwatha's Tome of Dark Rituals*, a long lost work attributed to an Elven loremaster once thought to have dwelt in a now ruined tower in the depths of the forest.

When her mastery of the language was great enough to read the tome, Dwimraqino learned of an artifact that ignited her clever and ruthless imagination. Morwatha wrote of an evil altar which had come into his possession. Carven in the shape of a toad, this onyx altar was consecrated to Morgoth. According to the tome, a sacrifice performed upon this altar would channel the *thúlé* (or life-force) of its victim not to Lord of the Dark but to the sacrificiant himself— the purer the victim's innocence, the greater the channeled power. Later, when the Blessed Child was discovered, Dwimraqino immediately recalled these words and began contemplating how she might turn the hope of the Woodmen to the increase of her own sorcery. With the aid of such power, she might bring all the Woodmen under the will of Nahtafath and raise herself in the ranks of his servants — higher even than Wulfapaida.

The unexpected arrival of Wulfapaida's envoy had taken Dwimraqino by surprise, forcing the *wita* to resort to desperate measures. Taking with her the pages from *Morwatha's Tome* that described the ritual and burning the rest of the volume, Dwimraqino sent Bokamawi westward, to lead her pursuers astray, while she went north with the child, donning a pair of enchanted boots to cover her tracks, bound for the ruins of Morwatha's tower.

All this Wulfapaida extracted from Bokamawi before cruelly ending her life.

The skin-changer now found himself in a desperate situation. Too far from his abode and his trusty servants, and needful of great haste, Wulfapaida could only hope, by pure luck, to cross paths with others who might be capable of thwarting Dwimraqino for him. Fortunately for the skin-changer, unanticipated obstacles threaten to delay the realization of the *wita's* designs on the Blessed Child.



THE WOOD-ELVES

The long and horrible winter has done much harm to the few Elves still residing in southern Mirkwood. Troubled by the misfortunes of his subjects, whose woes include packs of Plague-crazed wolves and rampaging Orcs, as well as loads of snow threatening to ruin their flets, the Elven-king Thranduil decided to send one of his trusty vassals, Othor, with a *turnin* (military company) of 100 soldiers to assist his dear southern kin. A few weeks prior to Dwimraqino's kidnapping of the Blessed Child, Othor made camp at Galbrethin, a Silvan glade not far from Morwatha's tower.

In the wintry weeks that followed, Othor set his *turnin* to the task of clearing the surrounding woods of Orcs and wolves. Many of these, he came to discover, had made their lair in the ruined tower several miles upstream from Galbrethin. The Wood-elves soon drew their net around Morwatha's tower and assaulted its denizens, destroying the majority with only minimal losses. Some of the Orcs escaped, however; and in order to prevent them from re-occupying the tower, Othor has set to demolishing it while the rest of his *turnin* hunt down the surviving Orcs and assist the local Elves and Woodmen against the winter.

This turn of events has complicated Dwimraqino's situation greatly. Seeing no chance of reaching the tower while it is watched by the Wood-elves, the *wita* was forced to seek out allies among the surviving Orcs. Using her divinatory powers, Dwimraqino succeeded in locating them before the Elves did. The remnant had taken refuge in a cave in the vicinity of Lonely Hill, a solitary height rising between two parallel ranges some miles from Morwatha's tower.

Though initially hostile towards the Wood-woman, Dwimraqino quickly turned the tables on her assailants. Seizing their leader by the throat, the *wita* used the sorcerous power of her gauntlet to melt his spine before the eyes of his awe-stricken followers. While the Orcs still quailed with fear, Dwimraqino took hold of the strongest among them (Shirgûl, bodyguard of the now-paralyzed leader) and proclaimed him

their new chieftain. The Orcs were in no position to argue!

Shirgûl'was relieved to hear that he and Dwimraqino had a common enemy in Othor's Wood-elves. Briefly, the *wita* offered to lend her powers to help the Orcs capture those Elven hunters who strayed from their companions, so that they might be held for ransom. By this ruse, explained Dwimraqino, the Elves could be led into an ambush and Shirgûl would have his vengeance. To this plan the Orcs gleefully assented.

An Orc in a forest is no match for a Wood-elf; but an Orc-band aided by sorcery may well overcome several Elves if these have no cause to suspect that their foes have recourse to supernatural power. So it proved for the *turnin*. Within a few days, no less than half a score of Othor's men were ensnared by the *wita* and her Orkish allies. Soon after the Wood-elves became aware that several of their comrades were missing, Othor received a ransom message (delivered by a bat controlled by Dwimraqino's will). It read:

I hold ten of your soldiers hostage, to be executed if you do not surrender to me Morwatha's toad-altar. Bring the altar at nightfall, three days hence, to the summit of Lonely Hill, or your fellow Elves will die.

Othor was greatly troubled by this message. Although he had no knowledge of the obscure artifact mentioned by the ransom note, he knew enough legends about Morwatha to fear the worst. The ruins of the tower had been largely cleared out by the *turnin* after its capture, but the subterranean levels remained sealed off by magical wards placed there centuries ago by the Elven-king's loremasters, lest some forgotten evil crawl out. Othor was loath to break these seals for fear of what might lie beyond, but with his men's lives at stake, he could not afford to ignore the ransomer's demands indefinitely.

THE DARK ELVES

Unbeknownst either to Dwimraqino or the Wood-elves, a third party has taken an interest in Morwatha's tower — and not for the better. This personage is Muristil, leader of a handful of renegade Penni (Dark Elves) who inhabit Thranduil's woodland realm. In ancient times, several Penni households joined themselves to the Wood-elves of Mirkwood, and most submitted to the rule of Thranduil's father, Oropher. A few Penni, however, refused to acknowledge the rule of the Grey-elven dynasty, and yet refused to relinquish their claim to the forest. Too few in number to pose any true threat to the peace of his domain, the Elven-king for the most part ignored these renegades, commanding his vassals to leave them be so long as they did no harm to his subjects.

Other Elven kindreds name these Penni "Dark Elves" because they are enamored of darkness, yearning for the sunless and moonless night of the Elder Days, before the coming of Men, when they alone of the speaking peoples walked the earth. The Penni regard all Elves as a master race, and scorn as deserters those of their own kind who heeded the summons of the Valar to abandon Middle-earth. They suffer no overlordship—least of all that of Morgoth or his Maiarin crony, Sauron—and so regard any other power of Darkness as a rival rather than an ally. Of such bent are Muristil and his few scores of companions.

Muristil has long known of the ruined tower and of the artifacts associated with it (possessed, like Dwimraqino, of a copy of *Morwatha's Tome of Dark Rituals);* but he had always thought that the tower had been plundered long ago, and that its treasures had all been lost or destroyed. Recently, however, one of his comrades (who had journeyed north to spy on the movements of Thranduil's folk) brought word that Othor had been sent with a *turnin* into the woods surrounding the tower. Believing that some concealed plan was afoot, Muristil decided to investigate further in the company of eleven of his kmsmen.

The Dark Elf-was sure that the actual goal of Othor's mission (once problems with the Orcs were settled) was to unseal and explore the subterranean chambers of Morwatha's tower — which strongly hinted that the ruins had not been *completely* stripped of booty. Muristil is motivated not so much by pure greed as by the spiteful urge to deprive the Elven-king of any treasures he might gain from Morwatha's store of gem-encrusted artifacts. Above all, Muristil is most eager to find the toad-altar since (according to the *Tome)* it is encrusted with two huge opals of the finest quality, which he hopes to take for himself.

The Penni know the glens and hollows of their forest more intimately than any other Elf; and so, with some good luck, Muristil stumbled upon a possible entrance into the underways of Morwatha's tower. Some two miles north of the tower, nearby a small waterfall, a cave was found. After establishing their camp within its outward recesses, Muristil's band advanced into the dark, long-forgotten corridors, hoping the caverns were somehow connected with the chambers below the tower.

II. STARTING THE PCs

This adventure has several potential points of entry. Given the volatile nature of the situation that has developed in and around Morwatha's tower, it is not necessary for the PCs to have any prior knowledge about the Blessed Child to become involved in the action. If the PCs are already within the borders of Mirkwood, they might simply happen upon Galbrethin vale; or they might actually be Woodmen or Wood-elves native to the region, or summoned from abroad to aid their kinsfolk.

On the other hand, if the PCs have not yet entered the forest and have no other motivating connection with the plot, the GM may make use of the following encounter.

The harsh winter of 1637 finds the PCs in the snow-laden Anduin vales, scouting the frozen countryside on behalf of the innkeeper of the secluded repose of Sunnagadal. (Run by a firm Northman family, this inn provides shelter for the Plague-displaced people who got stuck by the winter while passing through the lower vales.) Struggling to maintain his business, the innkeeper is eager to know about the possible presence of Orcs or wolves in the surrounding area, so he has sent the PCs to scout it out and tell him what they've seen.

Not too far from the inn, as they are returning from their patrol, the PCs are viciously assaulted by a pack of ravenous, half-starved wolves. The beasts outnumber the PCs five-to-one—they may never get back to Sunnagadal alive!

If by some miracle the PCs manage to hold their ground unscathed, still more wolves arrive, and more, until their situation is thoroughly desperate. (During the battle, at least one PC— preferably not an Elf or Dwarf, who are immune to disease — should be wounded by the wolves.)

Just when things are beginning to look grim, a tall figure clad in deep blue robes and a hood leaps into the midst of the fray, interposing himself between the PCs and the wolves. In a loud, commanding voice he strikes terror into the voracious creatures. *"Naur ðan i nDraughoth!"* he cries in the Elvish tongue, as the wolves miraculously turn tail and run.

After the last of the wolves has dispersed, the imposing figure turns to the PCs. "Greetings, fellow travelers. It is well for you that our paths crossed when they did! My name is Gallor," he says, bowing without removing his hood. "I seek Sunnagadal. Do you know if it is far?"

While the PCs introduce themselves in turn, Gallor begins knowledgeably examining the bodies of any wolves the PCs may have slain. "Ah, signs of the Redrot Plague!" he exclaims with sudden concern. "Were any of you bitten???"

After examining the wound(s), Gallor shakes his hooded head regretfully. "Poor soul...so horrible. I still quiver when I remember the stories told by old Gondorian women, stories of rotting flesh and of the tormented screams of those poor fellows.... Still, we will talk about this in the warmth of the inn. The disease is contractible only by blood, so you are safe to return to Sunnagadal. But here, imbibe this healing elixir now," he adds, handing the injured PC(s) a thin flask. "It is not enough to defeat the Redrot, but it will hinder its progress for up to a fortnight. If another dose is imbibed before that time, you will survive; if not..." he falls silent. "As I said, such matters are better discussed in the warmth of the inn."

The inn guests scoff in amazement at the appearance of a stranger among them (especially under such horrible weather conditions) when the PCs return to Sunnagadal, and the fact that Gallor refuses to remove his hood from his face does not encourage their conviviality. (If the PCs ask, Gallor explains apologetically that he suffers from a rare malady that requires him to constantly shield his eyes from light of any kind.)

Gallor now formally introduces himself as a scholar from Gondor (from Pelargir, if the PCs ask), who has decided to spend his final days in a lonely keep in Mirkwood where he spends his time studying tomes of lore close to his beloved Elves and Woodmen. He had been traveling to Tharbad, where he owns several ships and merchandise. The Plague, he remarks, devastated that city and turned it into a den of thieves. Hence he is worried about his possessions.

"But that is not worst of my woes," he laments. "I pray you, hear my tale of the horrible need which has brought me away from my warm home in these troubled times. Not long after I set out on my road, my beloved Woodmen (whose camp stands quite close to my keep) brought word to me that an evil woman — a-witch—had kidnapped one of their children. She seeks to spirit the infant away to Morwatha's tower, an ancient ruin in the depths of the Forest, there to viciously murder it in some unspeakable sorcerous ritual!

"Horrified, I sent my loyal servant Malkûsh to the Woodmen's camp to help muster a hunting party to stop the witch before she could accomplish her heinous scheme. But alas! the witch used her enchantments to lead the hunters astray, and now they are stranded in a snowdrift some seven leagues east of us. I go now to seek the aid of the good wizard, Radagast the Brown; but with the hunters waylaid by the witch's sorceries, I fear I may not return in time."

Gallor bows his hooded head in silent despair. Then, suddenly, he lifts it again with new hope. "Hear me, good sirs!" he says in hushed anticipation. "Mayhaps in helping to save the life of this innocent child of whom I have spoken, you would be saving the life of your own wounded comrade (s). For Malkûsh, my servant, carries with him an elixir of the same kind as I administered to your companion(s) just now. If you were to go to the Woodman hunters and help them thwart this witch's foul designs, Malkûsh would willingly surrender his vial to you. When the Woodmen have rescued the child with your help, they will lead you back to their camp where Malkûsh awaits their return. I too will have a message sent to him, instructing him to reward each and every one of you with your weight in gold pieces and any enchanted artifacts you may desire from my personal stock."

GM Notes: *It should be made clear to the PCs that it will not be possible for them to go to the Woodman camp for the elixir* first; *before fulfilling their mission, since too much precious time has already been lost for the hunters to turn aside from Dwimraqino's trail*

III. ENCOUNTERS

JOINING SWINTHA

To reach the frozen, demoralized Woodman hunters, the PCs have to travel through waist-deep snow in freezing weather through a countryside infested with Orcs, wolves and the like. Their encounter with Swintha and his poor lot of nine companions should awaken the PCs' curiosity about Gallor, Dwimraqino and the child. The Woodmen exercise caution when talking to the PCs, careful not to say anything against Gallor. They also avoid mentioning the "child tithe" (a source of shame for many of them and a cause for reproach should other Woodman bands hear of it).

Swintha pretends that he wants to return the abducted child (a son of his cousin) to Malkûsh, thanking "gracious Gallor" for sending the PCs to help. Convinced they are Gallor's loyal agents, he occasionally lets fall a flattering remark upon the PCs as well. In truth, Swintha despises Gallor, but has lost all hope of ever breaking the loremaster's hold over his people. (Swintha's

dream is to lead his band north, to the safety of peaceful woods where his fellow Woodmen reside.) Disillusioned and sad, all the old hunter wants from life now is a heroic death to match his reputation in life. Traveling with Swintha should awaken sympathy in the PCs for the unhappy lot of his once noble band.

Morwatha's tower may be reached by one of two routes: 1) by the northward path through the Anduin vale, and then eastward into the forest following the Woodman path; 2) straight east for the forest, and then (navigating with Swintha's help) continuing east, cutting short of the path. Encounters along the way may include rampaging Uruk-torg or other Orcs of the Necromancer, wild wolves and occasional wargs, starved boars, Plague-displaced brigands (in the vales), Woodman hunters or outcasts suffering from Plague and Elves (alone or in patrols). If they travel on or in the vicinity of the Orc-trail, they are at considerable risk of encountering a large raiding party.

While Swintha and his hunters know their way around the forest and its paths, they are, all the same, mortal, and could potentially slow the PCs down considerably. As headman of his band, Swintha is in possession of Gallor's wolf-charm, which will help in most circumstances (short of a straightforward Orkish ambush). Unfortunately, Swintha's charm could prove to be the worst liability for their quest. If one of Othor's patrols should find them and the Wood-elves were to mark the charm, the PCs would be in a lot of trouble, as the charm's device (the running wolf) is known to the Elves as the sign of "Garmesgel the Skin-changer" (as they call Wulfapaida in their language) —a high servant of the Necromancer and therefore one of the greatest enemies of the Free Peoples of Mirkwood. Together with their Woodman companions, the PCs would instantly be regarded as foes!

If a *turnin* patrol detects the PCs, the Wood-elves prepare an ambush, encircling them from concealed locations and demanding that they lay down their arms, stating their names and business. If the PCs and their Woodman companions comply peacefully, the Elves step out into the open and question them further. If no Elves are among the PCs, the ambushers won't be patient at all, attacking if not immediately obeyed. In the case of uncooperative PCs, the Wood-elves definitely search the non-Elven characters. Discovery of Swintha's charm under such circumstances would mean captivity for them all. Captured PCs are taken under guard to Galbrethin and held there on a flet used by the guards, to await Othor's judgment.

ENTERING GALBRETHIN VALE

Morwatha's ruined tower stands at the northeastern corner of a broad, open vale, crossed by a small stream that winds its way down from an encircling range of wooded hills. At the far western arm of the range lies the Silvan glade of Galbrethin, and farther upstream (near to the edge of the vale) stands a winter camp of the local Woodmen. While some Elves of the *turnin* may be found at Galbrethin, the majority (including Othor) are currently encamped around the tower.

While stealthy PCs might evade the Elven patrols on their journey, it would be all but impossible to go unnoticed once the outskirts of the vale have been reached. (Both the vale and the ten miles of forest surrounding it are being patrolled by the Wood-elves.) The PCs might want to approach the Woodman camp, contacting the Elves who occasionally come there. As headman of their southernmost kin, Swintha would be warmly welcomed by the Woodmen. This band is unaware of the state of things in Burgan Stath, so they would question Swintha about his people's ways.

(They believe that Swintha is fighting a righteous battle against the evils of the forest.)

If incarcerated at Galbrethin by the Wood-elves, any PCs conversant in the Silvan tongue are able to overhear the discussion of their guards: after an initial success against the Orcs of Morwatha's tower, the *turnin* presently faces a new danger. It seems that some powerful figure has organized those Orcs that escaped the Elven onslaught on the tower, so that it is no longer safe to wander by night. Some of their comrades have disappeared, and now it seems that this unknown force holds them for ransom. An altar has been demanded in exchange for the captives.

If the Elves have discovered Swintha's wolf-charm, Othor jumps to the conclusion that Garmesgel is the author of the ransom note and that the PCs are allied with the evil skin-changer. When brought before him for judgment, therefore, the PCs are accused of being Garmesgel's spies, sent to thwart Othor's mission, harm the local Elves and Woodmen, and to obtain "the foul altar." As proof of their collusion, Othor produces the ransom note. If the PCs manage to persuade Othor of their innocence, they are questioned and (hopefully) volunteer their assistance to the Elves — either to find the altar beneath the tower, or to free the hostages before the exchange is scheduled to take place.

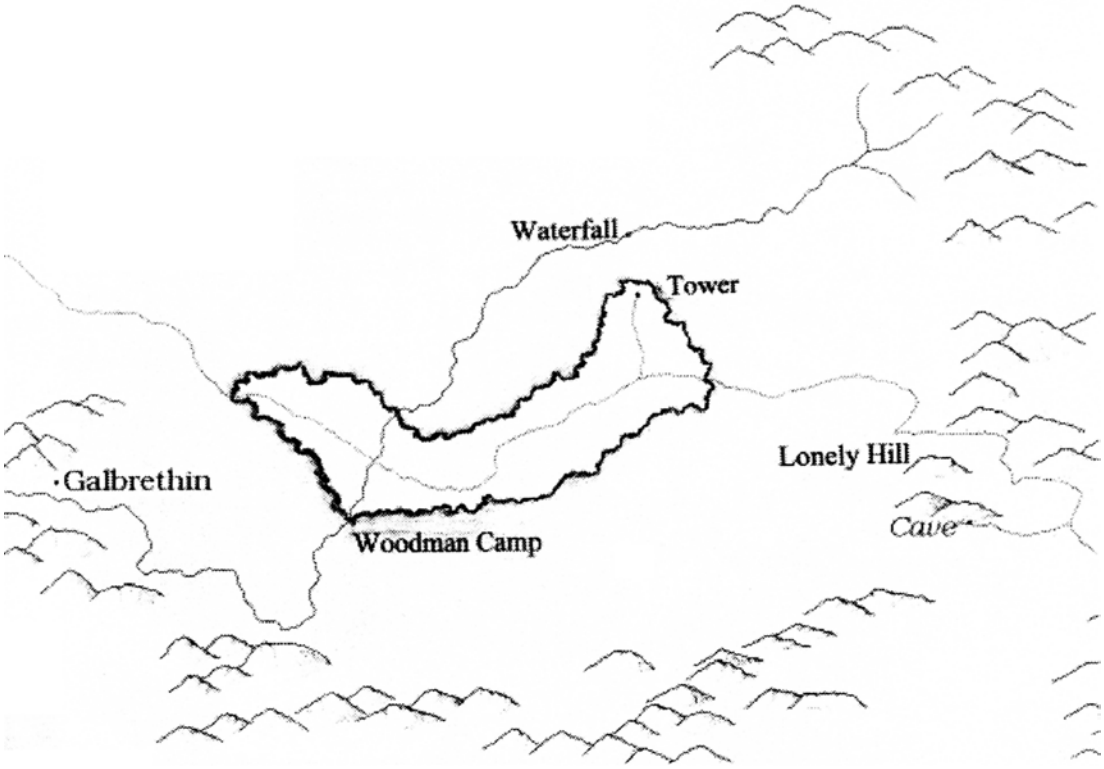
GM Note: *Unless persuasive arguments are made on behalf of their innocence, Swintha and his men are definitely kept in custody as bearers of Garmesgel's sign. For their part, the hunters are hesitant to make a spirited defence, for fear of being forced to confess the matter of the child tithe, as this would totally ruin their reputation with other Woodman bands. Later, however, if the PCs have proven faithful in helping to thwart Dwimraqino and her Orkish allies, they regain Elven confidence for themselves and release for Swintha's band. Otherwise, the Wood-elves surrender the hunters to the local Woodmen, desiring to maintain good relatione with their allies in Burh Widaus.*

EXPLORING THE TOWER

Because he can ill-afford to spare any of his *turnin* from the search to locate his kidnapped men before the ransom is demanded, Othor is especially eager to recruit the PCs for the task of recovering the altar from beneath Morwatha's tower. (In reality, Othor plans to use the altar as a lure, and hopes to defeat the Orcs without surrendering it.) If the PCs volunteer themselves for the mission, they're in for a sur-

prise — Muristil and his Dark-elven plunderers!

The main, sealed entrance stands at the opposite end or the subterranean vaults from the secret exit through which the Penni have entered, so that the PCs first have to get past some traps and natural obstacles (and maybe enchanted guardians as well) before they discover that they are not alone. The PCs first become cognizant of the interlopers by the rumor of fighting. (Muristil's band is presently attempting to dispatch a group of foul constructs — magically-created guardians, similar in kind to the watch-stones of the Drúedain—left behind by Morwatha to keep his hidden artifacts and altars safe.) The Penni have almost uncovered Morwatha's library and have seized some lesser artifacts, but have yet to find the toad-altar.



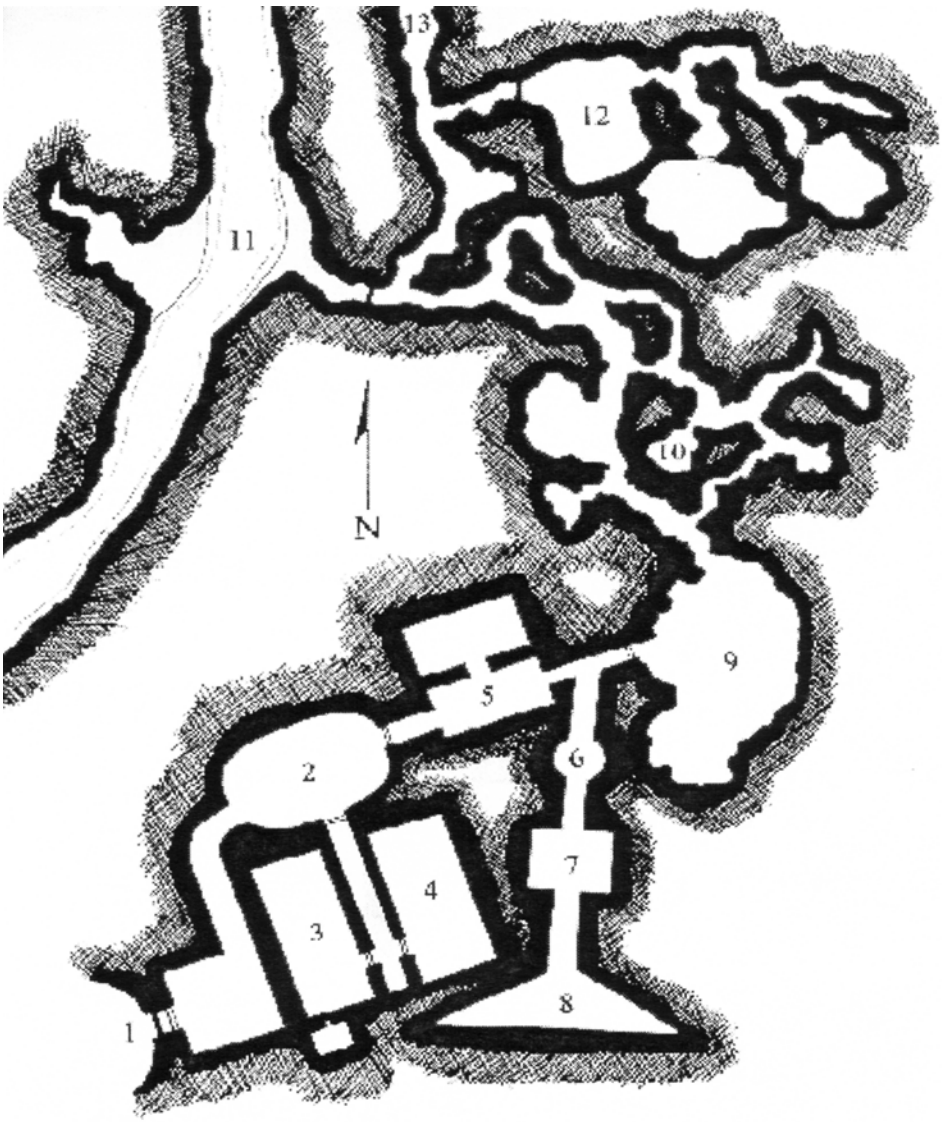
If the PCs confront Muristil or his comrades, the Dark Elves assume that they are foes — sent by Othor to rob them of their hard-won loot. However, the Penni, long inured to treachery and deceit, do not necessarily answer the PCs with immediate violence; instead, they endeavor first to ascertain their numbers, strength and purpose. Muristil is not above falsehood, and may contrive some cunning lie to lull the PCs into a temporary lapse of wariness so that his group may seize the upper hand or even trick the PCs into helping him acquire the altar. (He might, for instance, claim that he and his companions are one of the *turnin* patrols that found their way in here through the secret entrance while searching for their missing comrades.)

In the likely event that conflict between Muristil's band and the PCs becomes imminent, the Dark Elves prefer to wait until the most opportune moment to attack (preferably on terrain with -which they are more familiar than the PCs). They fight as a well-coordinated unit, pooling their talents to gang-up on individual opponents. They do, however, value their lives above mere booty; and if the Dark Elves are defeated, Muristil casts various spells of concealment, attempting to run away with as many artifacts as he can carry.

The toad-altar of which Morwatha's tome speaks may indeed be found in the subterranean chambers beneath the ruined tower (#11 below). It is, however, a fake bereft of its supposed powers. According to the *Tome* (a copy of which the GM might allow the PCs to find in the chamber), Morwatha acquired the altar from one of his Noldorin colleagues (Maellin of Eregion), who had himself obtained the artifact from the Beffraen savages of the Rast Vorn. It was from these that Maellin learned of the altar's alleged powers. (The Beffraen were known to have worshipped Morgoth during the Elder Days.) In fact, the crafty Beffraen lied to Maellin, conveying to him a counterfeit of the real altar (which still lies hidden in the depths of the Rast Vorn; see ICE's *Woses of the Black Wood*, p. 27, #32). Of course, neither the PCs nor anyone else in this adventure are likely to realize this until after the hostage exchange at Lonely Hill.

TOWER LAYOUT

1. **Entrance.** The magically hidden entrance connecting the subterranean vaults of Morwatha's tower to its ruined foundations is sealed by an enchantment which requires the utterance of a word in order to be loosed. This word ("key") is hinted at by a Sindarin inscription on the door bearing the following riddle: *I will guard your treasure if you guard me.* Once the riddle is guessed and its answer spoken, the portal may be opened by pushing its stone slab inwards.
2. **Study.** A suit of fine Elven platemail stands guard at each of this chamber's four corners; in its midst are a dust-covered chair and table. (Its drawers contain various parchment notes.) Two locked doors punctuate the east (Hard to open) and south (Very Hard to open) walls; a huge tapestry hangs upon the north wall, depicting the splendor of Oropher's court in its heyday. Elven-wrought, the enchantment of this tapestry draws its viewers into the scene, giving it the semblance of reality and motion for several minutes. If the tapestry is touched, two of the armored suits animate and attack as constructs.
3. **Library.** Shelves of tomes line the walls of this chamber; at its center stand two glass-covered cases displaying illuminated manuscripts. The contents of the library include titles on history, art, lore and poetry. If removed from its shelf, a silver-bound copy of the *Ainulindalë* triggers a secret door to open in the south wall, leading to a cramped cell with a desk and chair. The desk contains Morwatha's diary, which tells the Grey-elf's tale. In a hidden (Sheer Folly to find) niche in the wall behind the desk is a sacrificial dagger inscribed with fiery runes (+15, unholy), trapped with a poisonous needle.
4. **Laboratory.** Empty, apart from a single shelf and work table. The shelf holds containers for various elements and compounds, as well as a few tomes explaining



their use. The table is covered with the standard paraphernalia of an alchemist — instruments, pestles and mixing bowls, vials of (still usable) solutions, etc.

5. Museum. This double vault displays several of Morwatha's bizarre acquisitions: paintings, sculptures, (dormant) Drúadan watch-stones — even a fallen meteorite (containing a pound of *eog* ore).

6. Antechamber. Lined with 6 beautiful vases filled with (non-precious) gems.

7. Display Chamber. This second antechamber displays a brilliant diamond which, if removed from its pedestal, causes a ceiling slab to seal off the corridor, trapping the unfortunate within.

8. Display Chamber. The display pedestal at the center of this room is now empty.

9. Cavern Entrance. The door connecting the tower vaults to the natural caverns beyond is locked (Extremely Hard to open) and trapped with a needle (no longer poisoned). A single black stone slab (a replica of a Coentis altar dedicated to Sauron) occupies the east wall of the chamber. The altar delivers an "A" cold critical to any who touch it.

10. Dead End. Morwatha buried an evil dagger here (+15, Man-slaying). Adorned with rubies, the gilded blade is in pristine condition. It is buried in a locked casket (Sheer Folly to open, trapped with a poisoned needle) several feet below the floor of the cave.

11. Underground Stream. The remnants of a small boat with a half-rotten oar he on the near side of this icy rill (Very Hard to swim). Beyond stands the accursed toad-altar, which delivers a "B" cold critical on touch. Its opal eyes are each worth 100 gp. A hidden stone door made to look like the uncut rock passage around it (Very Hard to find) conceals this cavern from the rest.

12. Vivisectionary. Once used by Morwatha for dissecting and experimenting upon animals, these natural chambers are occupied by three construct guardians (currently being fought off by Muristil's band). The entryway (now open) is normally concealed as the door to #11 above.

13. Exit to Waterfall. The subterranean passage continues north for two miles until it reaches a concealed opening at the base of a small waterfall (Sheer Folly to detect from without). Muristil's Elves have sealed this exit with a large rock to prevent anyone from sneaking up on them unannounced.

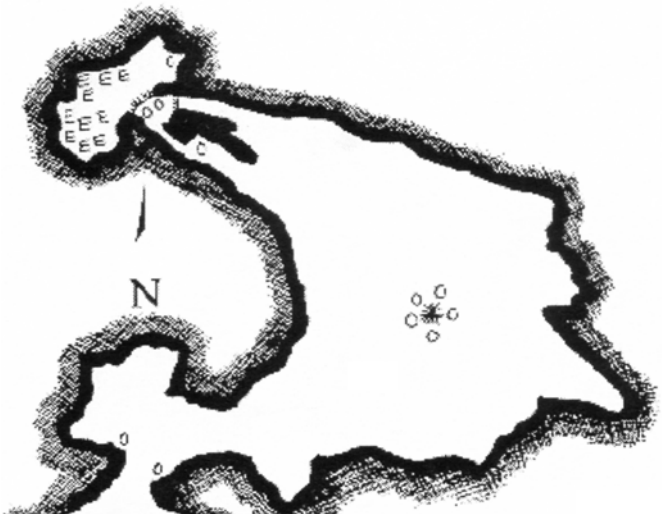
RESCUING THE HOSTAGES

Neither the Wood-elves nor Dwimraqino's Orkish allies intend to abide by the terms of the exchange proposed in the ransom note. Leaving the Elven hostages under guard in the nearby cave (with plans to kill them if he returns victorious with the altar), Shirgûl leads 30 of his strongest warriors against the 10 Elves Othor has sent to bear the altar to the hilltop. Othor, for his part, has, unbeknownst to the Orcs, concealed another 30 bowmen and 10 spearmen in the surrounding trees.

Dwimraqino, meanwhile, watches from a safe distance, ready to rush back to the cave if the battle goes badly for the Orcs. The *wita* has left the Blessed Child with the hostages in the cave; if the Orcs fail to gain the altar, her first concern is to return to get the child, concealing her movements with spells. If, on the other hand, Dwimraqino sees the PCs and perceives that Gallor has sent them (seeing Swintha would be enough), she panics, abandoning the child to save her own life.

If the PCs actually confront the *wita*, and she sees her own failure and death drawing nigh, Dwimraqino attempts to persuade the PCs of her innocence, exposing Gallor's evil intentions toward the child and discrediting Swintha by revealing the entire truth about the humiliating "child tithe." If nothing else, Dwimraqino's main goal now is to throw enough doubt into the PCs' minds as to the identity of the true villain so that she will have an opportunity to escape.

Given the chaotic situation about to break out on Lonely Hill, the PCs have a reasonable chance of entering the cave and rescuing both the Blessed Child and the Elven hostages. Othor is willing to lend them the support of a few soldiers from the *turnin* for this purpose. If the PCs learn the location of the cave prior to nightfall of the third day from the time that Othor received



the ransom note, and decide to enter them, the number of their adversaries will be significantly greater: 40 (albeit demoralized) Orcs as opposed to a mere 10 weaker Orc-guards if they arrive during the battle at Lonely Hill.

GM Notes: *It is up to the GMto determine when and by what means the PCs learn the location of the cave. They might hear of it from one of the Elven patrol, or they might take a more active rote by joining in the search themselves. Alternatively, they might have to wait until the random date, and then track Dwimraqino back to the cave.*

IV. OUTCOMES

Assuming Dwimraqino's plot is foiled and the PCs succeed in rescuing the Blessed Child, there are at least three possible outcomes to the adventure: 1) entrust the child to Swintha's care and remain under the protection of the Wood-elves at Galbrethin; 2) return to Burgan Stath and help the Woodmen to liberate themselves from Gallor's minions; 3) return to Burgan Stath and surrender the child to Malkûsh, claiming their reward.

1) If the PCs choose to remain at Galbrethin, the Wood-elves allow them to winter there. Othor, having heard the PCs' story, warns them to be careful, even to get out of the area for a while, because Garmesgel is notorious for his cruelty towards those who have deceived him. The *turnin* invites any Elven PCs to Thranduil's halls for the coming spring festivities (or perhaps to study in the king's rich library, which contains many magical tomes). As for non-Elven PCs, Othor offers them the hospitality of his own hearth at Telphand (Celebannon in north-eastern Mirkwood) in gratitude for their noble deeds — again, a chance to learn new lore skills or spell lists, get artifacts identified by the Elves, and the like. In either case, the PCs' reputation becomes greatly enhanced throughout the woodland realm, especially after Othor returns to the Elven-king's halls. (An Elven bard might even write a song about their heroic deeds.)

2) If the PCs choose to help Swintha liberate his people, they must confront Malkûsh and his guard of 20 Children of the Tithe. Any rumor of an uprising at Burgan Stath brings the wolf-riding Orcs of the Uruk-torg against the whole village by nightfall. If the PCs manage to rescue the band from Wulfapaida's evil dominion and help them to move north, the PCs would earn the friendship of all the Woodmen of the forest. They would also earn one awful enemy (Wulfapaida), who will seek vengeance against them once he returns from Angmar. Of course, it may take Wulfapaida a while to find out what actually happened and to explain this to the Necromancer. Once given a new position and a new set of servants, the skin-changer will be eager to send some of these minions to find and kill the PCs. This could lead to many other adventures in and around Mirkwood, and to the ultimate big adventure, the hunting down of Wulfapaida himself!

3) If the PCs choose to return the Blessed Child to Malkûsh, the Southron gives them their reward (including the healing elixir) and sends them on their way. The artifacts, all created by evil enchantment, are designed to corrupt their wielders. They consist of rings, +15 swords, swords with additional criticals (e.g., flaming), axes of man-slaying, x2 PP multipliers, +2 spell adders — whatever the PCs would be most happy with. As for the promised gold pieces, they are actually thinly-plated lead counterfeits of Gondorian mint — almost valueless, and highly dangerous to circulate were the fraud detected by the authorities. (It could lead to Gondorian military efforts to capture the PCs in order to ascertain the source of the counterfeits.)

Whatever the outcome, all PCs should advance in levels during this adventure and gain experience for dealing with complicated situations. However, PCs who are used to plundering the bodies of defeated opponents will be put to a great test, as many artifacts wrested from Dwimraqino or the Dark Elves might corrupt them! Evil artifacts which were still left, deeply concealed, below Morwatha's tower include a few fake altars (all of which, though encrusted by gold and gems, inflict A or B Cold or Impact criticals upon touch) and some sacrificial daggers. An evil artifact might also be enchanted with a *Charm* spell, so that the PC feels inclined to hide the item and claim it for himself. (The Wood-elves endeavor to destroy any such artifacts the PCs may point out to them.)

V. STATS

GM Note: Bonuses for magical items are already factored into OB and PP figures.

WULFAPAIDA

Level: 10.

Profession: Mage.

Hits: 139, **Melee OB:** 85bs **Missile OB:** NA **AT:** None (15 + Adrenal Defense 68).

Stats: Co 89, Ag 91, Ig 87, St 99, Pr 90, It 75.

Skills: Climb 40, Swim 30, Track 55, Stalk/Hide 40, Pick Lock/Disarm Trap 20, Perception 50, Disguise 60, Acting 65, Wolf Lore 60, Diplomacy 50, Leadership 60, Public Speaking 60, Region Lore: Mirkwood, Anduin Vales, Angmar 75, Region Lore: Southern Gondor 40.

Spells (10 PP): Physical Enhancement, Unbarring Ways, Essence Hand, Illusions, Spirit Mastery.

MovM: 20.

Special Powers:

- **Skin-changing.**
- **Martial Arts.** Striking: Novice 85, Standard 80, Expert 75.

Principal Items:

- **Belt of the Living Change.**
- **+ 15 broadsword of Man-slaying.** Bonus counted in Melee OB.
- **+2 spell adder.** Gold-woven necklace.

DWIMRAQINO

Level: 7.

Profession: Animist.

Hits: 52 **Melee OB:** 35qs **Missile OB:** NA **AT:** Soft Leather (10).

Stats: Co 88, Ag 92, Ig 76, St 58, Pr 67, It 96.

Skills: Climb 62, Ride Wolf 57, Stalk/Hide 45, Read Rune 37, Use Item 47, First Aid 60, Dark Lore 40, Perception 52, *Wita* Rituals 65, Region Lore: Southern Mirkwood 50.

Spells (14 PP): Surface Ways, Organ Ways, Bone/Muscle Ways, Blood Ways, Direct Channeling, Animal Mastery, Purifications, Creations.

MovM: 0.

Special Powers: Base Spells +14.

Principal Items:

- **Gauntlet of the Vengeful Healer.** Inflicts wounds equivalent to that which the wielder would normally heal. (See *Rolemaster Compendium III*, p. 37.)
- **Enchanted boots.** Leave no trace.

+15 quarterstaff. Also a +2 spell adder for Channeling.

SWINTHA

Level: 8.

Profession: Warrior.

Hits: 109 **Melee OB:** 115ha **Missile OB:** 96cb; 94sp **AT:** Soft Leather (50 w/small shield).

Stats: Co 92, Ag 96, Ig 59, St 90, Pr 76, It 68.

Skills: Climb 63, Track 58, Stalk/Hide 55, Perception 45, First Aid 30, Region Lore: Southern Mirkwood 65, Leadership 60, Foraging 55.

MovM: 15

Principal Items:

- **+ 10 hand-axe.** Quality steel; bonus counted in Melee OB.
- **Gallor's seal.** Charm of protection against wolves.

+5 composite bow.

OTHOR ("Ohtar;" Cf. Section 14.2 of ICE's *Mirkwood*.)

Level: 21.

Profession: Warrior.

Hits: 130 **Melee OB:** 145bs **Missile OB:** 1601b **AT:** Plate (65 + 10 w/shield).

Stats: Co 88, Ag 100, Ig 89, St 96, Pr 97, In 91.

Skills: Climbing 99, Stalk/Hide 106, Ride Horse 78, Boat-handling 70, Perception 97, Leadership 80, Region Lore: Mirkwood 90, Trading 50, Tactics 87, Military Organization 91, Diplomacy 67, Administration 60, First Aid 89.

MovM: 10.

Principal Items:

- **+ 10 enchanted shield/breastplate.**
- **+20 mithril broadsword.**

+20 long bow.

MURISTIL

Level: 9.

Profession: Mage.

Hits: 61 **Melee OB:** 25da **Missile OB:** 35da **AT:** None (25: robes + *Shield* spell).

Stats: Co 67, Ag 81, Ig 99, St 52, Pr 93, It 95.

Skills: Read Rune 92, Use Item 77, Perception 20, Penni Rituals 76, Region Lore: Mirk-wood 80, Foraging 60, Leadership 78, Appraisal 69.

Spells (36 PP): all open/base lists except Water Law, Essence's Ways and Physical Enhancement.

MovM: 20.

Special Powers: Directed Spells +90, Base Spells +18.

Principal Items:

- **x2 PP multiplier.** Opal ring (bonus counted in PP).
- **+3 spell adder.** Bracelet of golden interlocked ornament-work.
- **+ 10 dagger.** with decorative pommel, returns via. Long Door; bonus counted in OBs.

MALKÛSH

Level: 8.

Profession: Mage.

Hits: 76 **Melee OB:** 15sc **Missile OB:** l0da **AT:** None (10).

Stats: Co 66, Ag 90, Ig 99, St 39, Pr 59, It 78.

Skills: Stalk/Hide 35, Read Rune 90, Use Item 66, First Aid 40, Torture 80, Alchemy 60.

Spells (16 PP): Essence Perceptions, Fire Law, Earth Law, Light Law, Wind Law, Living Change.

MovM: 10.

Special Powers: Directed Spells +74, Base Spells +16.

Principal Items:

- **Harkush.** A forest rat familiar.
- **A case of torture instruments.**
- **Small book.** Of love poems, in Haruze.
- **+2 Spell Adder.** A desert amber broach in the shape of a dagger.

Military Table

Name (#)	Lvl	Hits	AT	DB	Sh	Gr	MeleeOB	MissileOB	MovM
WOOD-ELVES OF THE *TURNIN*									
Bowmen (40)	5	80	Ch/13	20	N	N	75bs	95lb	10
Axemen (30)	5	75	Ch/13	30	Y	N	95ha	80cp	10
Spearmen (30)	5	78	Ch/13	15	N	N	lOOsp	85sp	10
WOOD-ELVES OF GALBRETHIN									
Leaders (6)	8	90	SL/5	30	N	N	90sp	100lb	20
Veteran Warriors (36)	4	45	SL/5	25	N	N	60sp	65lb	15
Young Warriors (18)	2	35	SL/5	20	N	N	50sp	50lb	15
WOODMEN OF GALBRETHIN*									
Headman	10	120	SL/5	50	Y15	N	125ha	120lb	10
Veteran Hunters (10)	5	70	SL/5	30	Y	N	80ha	80lb	0
Average Hunters (24)	3	50	No/1	30	Y	N	50ha	40lb	0
Young Hunters (14)	2	30	No/1	30	Y	N	40ha	30lb	0
Wita (1)	9	60	No/1	15	N	N	45sp	20lb	5
SHIRGÛL'S ORC-BAND**									
Shirgûl	7	80	Ch/14	30	Y	Y	90sc	55sb	0
Veteran Warrors (10)	4	50	SL/8	20	Y	Y	55sc	25sb	0
Adult Warrors (10)	3	45	SL/8	20	Y	Y	50sc	20sb	0
Young Warrors (10)	2	35	SL/7	0	N	Y	40pa	lOsb	0
Scouts (4)	4	40	No/1	20	N	N	50sc	30sb	10
DARK ELVES***									
Animist (1)	5	45	No/1	25	N	N	50sp	40lb	20
Mage (1)	5	30	No/1	20	N	N	30qs	30lb	15
Scouts (4)	4	40	SL/5	30	N	N	45bs	55lb	15
Fighters (5)	4	45	Ch/13	20	Y	N	60bs	65lb	15
WULFAPAIDA'S SERVANTS									
Apprentice Mages (5)	4-8	25-80	No/1	10-25	N	N	20-70da	0-30da	5-20
Tithe Children (20)	1-6	10-80	varies	10-30	varies	varies	10-90	10-70	0-20
URUK-TORG									
Commanders (6)	8	105	CH/14	35	Y10	A/L	105bs	65sb	0
Lurg Leaders (16)	6	70	Ch/13	30	Y	N	80sc	50sb	0
Warriors (48)	3	45	SL/8	20	Y	CO	50sc	20sb	0
Young Warriors (110)	2	35	SL/7	0	N	N	40pa	lOsb	0
War Wolves (70)	4	100	No/3	30	—	—	LBi75	—	30
MORWATHA'S TOWER									
Constructs****	5	180	Pl/20	0	N	A/L	80sp	—	-5

* May also be used for the Woodmen of Burgan Stath (minus the headman and *wita)* or Burh Widaus (double numbers).
** These numbers reflect the strength Shirgûl brings with him to Lonely Hill. The Orcs remaining in the nearby caves may be scaled as the GM sees fit.
*** All have good quality artifacts: Mage and Animist have spell adders or daily spell items (maybe even a PP multiplier); Warriors have enchanted armor and weapons; Scouts wear boots of stealth, cloaks of hiding and the like.
**** No minds to attack. Reduce the severity of criticals by two steps. Ignore bleeding and stun damage from criticals, except on leg criticals, which can unbalance them.

ENDNOTE

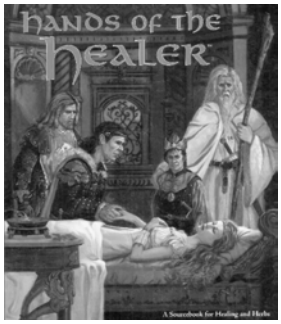
The author would like to thank Chris Seeman and Sam Daish for their contributions to the text and stats for this adventure. Certain parts of the original adventure, giving further detail to the character of Morwatha and the fulfillment of the Prophecy of the Blessed Child (in case the PCs met with success) were not included due to requirements of space. Those interested in obtaining these parts of the story should write to the author, who would be most glad to provide them.

Product Review

Mark Feil

Hands of the Healer

(#2026) Charlottesville, Virginia
Iron Crown Enterprises, 1997
[160 pgs.; $18.00]



The promise of this product can be found on page 5: "*Hands of the Healer* is the first title in ICE's Lore of Middle-earth series." The theme resurfaces in the discussion of Findegil, loremaster to King Eldarion and compiler of the Red Book of Westmarch. Findegil, it appears, embarked on a quest to gather all the lore of Middle-earth together, and *Hands of the Healer* was the first such book. But we all know the fate of the MERP line, and art imitates life. There will be no more Lore of Middle-earth books, no more MERP books of any kind for some time, and no 160 page tomes like this one ever again. *Hands of the Healer* is the sole example of its breed. It is the first and the last.

After a brief introduction, *HotH* discusses four new skills, rule modifications that bring Lifegiving and other healing spell effects more in line with Middle-earth, and some rules for finding herbs in the wild. Following this is the meat of the book — a survey of the healing traditions found in some forty plus cultures across Middle-earth, from High Elves to the Mûmakani. This section occupies some 70 pages, about half the work. Many of the cultures described are seen for the first time, and are found far to the East or South. An authoritative catalogue of all useful herbs takes up the majority of the work's remaining pages, and is capped off by two scenarios for the MECCG and an attempt at an index.

Before I go much farther, I should make it clear that I am not a language expert, nor have I read Christopher Tolkien's ten volume corpus, the History of Middle-earth. My ability to spot inconsistencies between MERP products and the canon is limited. My talents, instead, lie in running and playing games: scripting storylines, creating characters and shamelessly pillaging RPG products from a variety of companies for ideas that I can slip into my own long-running *Fantasy Hero* campaign. My bias noted, let us continue.

There is no doubt that the book's survey of healing traditions is its strongest asset. Covering as it does such a wide variety of cultures, many of which are very different than the traditional Gondorian-influenced lands of northwestern Middle-earth, the work is a marvelous sourcebook for fantasy games of all types. The cultures are amazingly diverse and potentially very useful. Although the rules for these new traditions—be they Elven healing songs, Dwarven jewel-healing, or the Ru-lani monkey dance — are described in the unfortunate Rolemaster system, most MERP players are familiar enough with RPG conversion that we can use the traditions described here for whatever game we happen to be playing. I found the sections on Elvish undead, the "Lingerers" and the "Houseless," to be especially interesting. In a similar vein, the undead society of the Oathbreakers is also glimpsed, complete with a Camarilla-like system of undead clans, providing the unusual opportunity for White Wolf style role playing within a Middle-earth setting.

Hands of the Healer is well referenced, and makes frequent use of quotes from the canon, including *Morgoth's Ring* and *War of the Jewels*. Although many of the most recent MERP releases have remained loyal to "Professor Tolkien's legacy," more effort has been made than ever to provide reference and citation. These citations provide starting points for research on the part of the reader, and they show that the canon does not, indeed, focus exclusively on the cultures of northwest Middle-earth, as a reading of LotR might lead us to believe.

On the negative side, the text is dense and only sparsely illustrated, though the quality of the art is generally quite good. Small print with dense text does at least mean that there is much to read, and the format of the work makes it easy to jump around, reading whatever culture happens to interest you.

The catalogue of herbs, though by far the largest such index and undoubtedly useful, is marred by occasional editorial lapses such as missing Attack Levels for some poisons, or other minor errors. Much more disheartening is the index to the plants. An effort has been made to place the herbs into 15 categories, and also to list them by terrain found, but the end result is less than satisfactory. An example may serve to illustrate the situation.

A Hobbit burglar, while climbing a tree in Mirkwood, accidentally falls and stumbles into the den of a venomous snake, which bites him. Fortunately, his friend the Ranger is trained in healing arts, and has access to an arsenal of useful plants. Which one could be used to treat the Hobbit's snakebite? If the player opens up to the index of *HotH*, he will find many categories of herbs that might apply, including Con-

cussion Relief, General Purpose, Life Preservation, Drug and Physical Alteration/Enhancement. Which of these will relieve poison? There are over 30 different poison antidotes among the nearly 300 herbs presented, listed in all of these categories and others. What is needed is an index that lists herbs by ailment: be it snakebite, fever, hypothermia or something else. Also, the index does not reference any of the unique medical practices listed in the discussion of healing traditions, many of which could be very beneficial.

Like *The Northern Waste* realm module, *HotH* includes scenarios for use with the Middle-earth Collectible Card Game. It also includes 16 new cards, but for some inexplicable reason most of these new cards are sites. Why not some of the many herbal remedies, poisons, rituals or even character types described in the rich backgrounds that span Middle-earth? Healers and their lore are just as applicable to the MECCG as they are to MERP. Truly, it is a shame to see such an opportunity for expansion missed. Perhaps the card game will get its own MECCG expansion set later this year.

At first glance, *Hands of the Healer* appears to be a profession manual not unlike AD&D's *Fighter's Handbook* and its descendants, or even the unending series of White Wolf Clan/Tribe/Guild books. ICE has covered many of the traditional MERP character roles in other books, but never before has a single product been devoted completely to the history, character creation and unique rules of a specific PC type. Could we have expected future books on Warriors, Wizards, and even Burglars? Was *HotH* the first in this sort of series?

That seems unlikely. The role of a healer is by its nature one better suited to non-player characters, and the format of the book makes it ideal for a company that is traveling all over Middle-earth, interacting briefly with a series of diverse cultures. A book targeted more directly at players who would have gone into much more depth on the cultures of northwestern Middle-earth, at the expense of those traditions found in the South and East. It might have included unique spell lists or famous artifacts related to healing traditions—perhaps a detailed history of the Gondorian "Houses of Healing." For these and other reasons, *HotH* may be more useful to gamemasters than the individual player.

This is, however, a matter of degree. *Hands of the Healer* is a wonderful sourcebook on a subject that has received little treatment by the RPG industry at large. Players will find two or three character concepts on every page. Gamemasters will see adventure possibility and the attraction of new and unusual settings peopled by rich and unique cultures. The healing plants and deadly poisons collected in *HotH* will be useful — and dangerous—to PC and NPC alike. At $18, the book seems a little pricey, but there is a surprisingly large amount of information here and you will not be disappointed. Finally, *HotH* is valuable not only because of what it is, but because of what it might have been: the first in a series of sourcebooks spanning all of Middle-earth, packed with cultures, personalities and other concepts usable in any fantasy game. What a delight it would have been to see Secrets of the Seer or even *Methods of the Merchant*. But the MERP line was not robust enough to support such products, and for that we mourn.

Reviewer: Jason Vester

ERRATA FOR
HANDS OF THE HEALER

Olivier Morelle
(morell.o@lac.gulliver.fr)

HERB TYPES

Árunya > Drug

Bitterlove > Physical Alteration/Enhancement

ATTACK LEVELS

Creagach-chnàimh > 8

Deadly Milk-white Trumpet > 8 for pollen/10 for seed pods

Dinfuin > 8

Lothgalen > 2

Madarch (undiluted *norechor*) > 2

Madwort > 12-15

Metsästäjän Kukka > 20

Nelthandon > Lvl 5 (-10 RR) ; Mild "muscular poison" effect max. On failure, induce powerful vomiting (target acts at -30 during 1 hour per 5 failure). On success, induce only limited vomiting (targets acts at -10 on the next 5 minutes)

Wolfstooth > 5

THE ROAD CREW

Gen ***Chris*** ***Bridget*** ***Quentin***

Fine Print

Other Hands is an international gaming journal devoted to fantasy role playing set in J.R.R, Tolkien's secondary world of Middle-earth. It is a quarterly, nonprofit publication welcoming submissions dealing with any aspect of gaming in the context of Tolkien's world: scenario ideas, rule suggestions, gaming product reviews, gamemastering aids, bibliographic resources, essays on Middle-earth, and whatever else our readership would like to see in print. In a word, *Other Hands* aims to be the definitive Tolkien-related gaming journal for a worldwide role playing communitiy. Within the pages of *Other Hands*, the interested gamer may publish materials with reference to any game mechanics he or she chooses (including *Rolemaster* and *Middle-earth Role Playing)*. Such gaming material may deal with any time period of Tolkien's world, and need not be bound to what has already seen print in Iron Crown's modules. *Other Hands* provides this freedom because it is a nonprofit publication. Subscription rates are as follows: USA/Canada ($6.25/Issue), South/Central Amerca ($6.75), UK/Europe ($7.25), New Zealand/Australia ($7.75), For other zones, contact Chris Seeman. Payment should be made to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213 Novato, CA 94948, USA. No Eurochecks, please! Submissions are welcome in any from (preferably legible), but we prefer if you can to send a file. We use Word for Windows. If there is any question as to the readability of your file, please save it in ASCII or text-only format and include a hard copy. All submissions must be sent to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213, Novato, CA 94948 [USA]. Please write me or call if you have any difficulties. My phone number is [415] 892-9066. Please note also that I may be reached on-line at: **chrisl224@aol.com.**